

For immediate release:

October 25, 2016

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First Thursday Talk at the Fitchburg Historical Society

Focuses on Alvah Crocker and the Engineers Who Built the Hoosac Tunnel

(Fitchburg, MA) **The Fitchburg Historical Society will present an historical talk on “Alvah Crocker: Spirit Behind the Hoosac Tunnel” by author Cliff Schexnayder on Thursday, November 3, at 5:15 p.m. The talk is free to the public, and will take place in the George R. Wallace Jr. and Alice Wallace Exhibition Hall of the Fitchburg Historical Society, Phoenix Building, 781 Main Street, Fitchburg.**

Long-time residents, and many historians, know of Fitchburg’s Alvah Crocker, one of the most successful and influential businessmen in New England during the 1800’s. His businesses, family and legacy shaped central Massachusetts and especially Fitchburg, Massachusetts. It was there that he made his home and based his largest businesses.

A pioneer in Fitchburg’s paper industry, in banking, and in railroad companies, Crocker set himself a nearly impossible task in the building of the Berkshires’ five-mile Hoosac tunnel...which involved cutting (or blasting) a way directly through a mountain for the very first time. When it succeeded, Boston and the rest of Massachusetts were directly connected by rail with the western United States: a prerequisite for the economic growth of northern Massachusetts.

Cliff Schexnayder has a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from Purdue University. He has written about construction and is especially interested in understanding major construction projects from the past; for example, he has worked as an engineering consultant for museum exhibitions on historic building methods. His research for his 2015 book on the Hoosac Tunnel, *Builders of the Hoosac Tunnel*, was supported with a fellowship from Smithsonian Institute Libraries.

The Fitchburg Historical Society is located at 781 Main Street, Fitchburg in the historic Phoenix building. There is abundant on-street parking near the Historical Society and free parking behind the building. The building is handicapped accessible.

For more information, call 978-345-1157, email welcome@fitchburghhistoricalsociety.com, visit www.fitchburghhistoricalsociety.org or <https://www.facebook.com/FitchburgHistoricalSociety>.