Charles Howard Watson was born on November 19, 1868 in Fayette, Maine, son of Willard Glover Watson and Mary Anne Fifield Watson. After attending public schools in Maine, Charles and his school friend, Frank H. Foss, left Maine and travelled to Boston to seek their future. In Boston, Charles was employed in the large Boston Market. In 1887, Charles and Frank Foss moved to Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Frank went into building trades with his father. Then he served 54 years with Wiley and Foss, building contractors. He was a United States Congressman for the Third Congressional District and Chairman of Republican Massachusetts Committee.

Charles established a meat business in Fitchburg, carrying on a house-to-house trade with a butcher cart. In 1890, he purchased the meat business of W. W. Lamb at the corner of 497 Main and River streets and later took over the grocery business of Alphonso Kelley in the adjoining store. The area (next to the Nashua River) became known as Watson’s Corner in 1892. His employees in the 1892 photo from left to right: Carl Ferguson, Ed Adams, P. Ellingworth, Ed Terry, Bill Keating, C. H. Watson, Charles Blood and Frank Ellingworth. In 1911, additional workers included: Bill Logan, Chambers, Cotie, C. Blood Jr., Lerotch, E. Gagnon, Friday Goodwin, George Watson (Charles’s stepbrother), R. Cristy, Sawedoff Lucien, Jack Cavanaugh and William Reed. The store had a fleet of ten horse-drawn wagons to deliver orders throughout the city. In 1911, Charles had the old wooden buildings torn down and built a large two-story brick building: Fitchburg Public Market – the largest and most modern store in Fitchburg that included a cooling plant – an automatic system that works through compression of liquid ammonia.

In 1917, he opened a branch store at 214 Pearl Street. Two years later he sold the Main Street market to Brockelman brothers and enlarged the Pearl Street store.

When Charles moved to Fitchburg in 1890, Emma Florence Watson, his sister, served as his bookkeeper until her marriage to Oscar Thayer on Sept 18, 1895...

(Continued on Page 2)
Charles Howard Watson And Watson’s Market (continued...)

...continued from page 1) Then, Florence Maude Gibson became his bookkeeper. They were married on May 6, 1897.

Charles served on the city council from 1909 to 1911 from Ward 3. They built a home at 19 Bond Street with a large building in the rear with stalls for the horses needed at the market in 1890's. Charles and Florence had four children: Carolyn May, Blanche, Willard Gibson, and Charles Howard, Jr. By 1934, the Pearl Street store was remodeled and his sons (Willard and "Chick" as he was known) became his partners. Bill Logan was the butcher and was famous for his home-made tomato sausage. Tom Chapman delivered orders.

The History of Cooking in Fitchburg

To honor the 250th Anniversary of Fitchburg in 2015, Bruce Coyette, a member of Fitchburg State University's ALEA Board and Curriculum Committee and the lead chef for its Cooking Class, decided to look into the history of how cooking evolved in Fitchburg. His research took him to the Historical Society where he found a wealth of information.

Bruce discovered that from 1764 to the early 1800s, most cooking was done in a fireplace hearth. He noted that the early settlers preferred game hunting to animal husbandry. They would roast larger parts of the animals over the fire and use smaller parts in soups and stews. A large kettle was usually their only cooking pot. Most of their gardens were planted along the Nashua River where they grew turnip, cabbage, carrots, onions, squash, corn and pumpkins. They also grew fruit and berries that would be turned into jams, jellies, sauces, and pies. They used a brick box to bake bread in the fire. The first stove invented in 1830 allowed more space for cooking and pies. They used a brick box to bake bread in the fire. The first stove invented in 1830 allowed more space for cooking.

The Cumings Theater on Blossom Street was a Fitchburg movie house that partnered with Limoges. The Cumings began to advertise Thursdays as “Ladies Night” in the Sentinel. Each woman who came to the theater on that night would receive a free piece of Limoges “Rosalie” pattern china with 22K gold trim. This idea worked. For every one-hundred and ten dollars that the owner invested in Limoges dishes, he made an additional profit of three-hundred dollars at the box office.

You are welcome to come by and see these lovely pieces of Fitchburg history Mondays and Tuesdays from 10-4 and Wednesdays to 6 during our regular hours.

The History of Cooking in Fitchburg (continued...)

...continued from page 2) came to work in the many factories that were being built. When the trains began coming from Boston to Fitchburg regularly, there was a need for places where visitors could eat and sleep. The American House, the Hotel Raymond and the Johnsonia offered excellent accommodations and fine dining. Their restaurants were also open to the public. The Fay Club, a private club for businessmen, offered an elegant dining room. Menus for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners at all of these establishments can be viewed at the Historical Society.

In the early 1900s, the famous Boston cook/cookbook author Fannie Farmer, came to Fitchburg to teach cooking classes at Burbank how to cook. Almost 100 years later, famous chef Julia Child also came to lecture at Fitchburg State in 1999. It is said that she asked her driver to stop at McDonald’s before heading to the college.

After the immigrants arrived, they began to share their ethnic dishes. John Fong Ying opened the first Chinese restaurant across from the American House. The Greeks began opening eateries along Main Street, the Italians on Water Street and the French Canadians in Cleghorn. By the turn of the century a new kind of place to eat called “a diner” began to pop up in the area. The Moran Square Diner, the 50/50 Diner and the East Side Diner were opened in Fitchburg. During this same time and later, The Ye Ole Oyster Bar, Murnik’s, The Rendezvous, The Fitchburg Lunch, Dan Chan’s, the Marconi Club, Slattery’s, Singapore, Il Forno’s, the City Hall Cafe, Destin-e’s and many other popular eateries would open their doors...

Bruce’s research provided the material for his PowerPoint presentation which he shared with the cooking classes, with the Historical Society and with Fitchburg State University’s Food For Thought program honoring a tasty part of Fitchburg’s history. The PowerPoint is also available as a manuscript at the Historical Society. You may also want to spend some time looking in the Cookbooks Archival Box which contains locally created cookbooks such as 200th Anniversary cookbook entitled Folk Foods of Fitchburg: A Culinary Heritage which features Armenian, Chinese, English, French, French Canadian, French Parisian, German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Jewish, Old Yankee, Scottish, and Swedish recipes along with Mother Cecile’s Candies. Yummy!

"Dish Night” at the Cumings Theater

In the 1930s, during The Great Depression, many businesses came up with creative ways to continue to keep their companies afloat. The Limoges Company of Ohio, manufacturers of dish ware, sold their goods directly to movie theaters. Their salesmen convinced theater owners that offering dishes to just the women would attract them to the movies and their attendance and profits would increase.

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You are welcome to come by and see these lovely pieces of Fitchburg history Mondays and Tuesdays from 10-4 and Wednesdays to 6 during our regular hours.

Written by: Ronald G. Watson, son of Willard G. Watson and grandson of Charles Howard Watson

Written by: Kathleen Flynn
We didn’t know they were Greek -- We just loved the food

Yogurt, tzatziki, souvlaki, even soured cream and feta cheese were not foods most of us ate growing up. But as Greece became a tourist destination, these foods became popular and now we enjoy them regularly.

Another favorite breakfast and lunch spot for General Electric and Main Street workers was Mike Murnik's. Though Mike was Lithuanian, his little restaurant with the big sandwiches and even bigger muffins was purchased by Ed Andrelllos, who kept Mike's name over the door. Today, in that same Main Street vicinity, the City Hall Café, owned by chefs John and Dina Karantinos, are serving up delicious meals, some in the traditional Greek style.

John Bicoules and Peter Plumpides (aka Brown) washed dishes for the restaurant in the Johnsonia Building until they decided to start their own businesses. Peter opened the Majestic Restaurant in Pittsfield; John opened John's Restaurant at 703 Main Street, a favorite place to eat since the repeal of Prohibition. The cafe has the distinction of having been a speakeasy during the 1920s.

1959; Chris continued until 2004 when he sold to Chris Bujold. John's son Chris took over the operation of the business after his father had a heart attack. Father and son were usually on site together until Fred's death in 1959; Chris continued until 2004 when he sold to Chris Bujold.

The Cottage Lunch at 740 Main Street, currently a public park, was owned during the late forties by Christ [Chris] Cholaki and Chick Pappas. Chick's sister, Helen Pappas Cholaki, passed away in 2010 at the age of 93. Unfortunately it was destroyed by fire in 1963.

Just after the turn of the 20th century, the first Greek fruit peddler, Simeon Fanos, sold bananas from a push cart. Incidentally, his oldest daughter was the first Greek baby born in Fitchburg. As more immigrants came to Fitchburg, Kaffeneia (shops where the men drank their strong Greek coffee and socialized), ice cream and candy shops and grocery stores were opened. Names like Panos, Karis, Pappas and Nikitas came to mind. It was not unusual to find confectionery stores near theaters and many of those shops were owned by members of the Greek community.

There is a connection between the Oyster Bar and the famous tunnel under Fitchburg's Main Street. There was a big heavy door at the basement level that was reputed to lead to the tunnel, which had gone out of use by the post-World War II period.

Epirus, Greece in 1907 and became involved in Ide's grocery business about 1938. According to Fitchburg City Directories, he was one of several proprietors of the grocery store, so it is assumed that it wasn't long after George recognized the value of that portable cart and fashioned it into a permanent stand from which he began selling his famous hot dogs.

George wore a white apron, a straw hat and always had a pleasant smile for his customers. For several years the Sentinel ads included the signature straw hat. George's always opened the spring and summer season, usually the first week in March, with free coffee all day. It was not unusual to find an extra bag of potato chips tucked into the box with the hot dogs and hamburgers we purchased. Though it went through other hands for a short time, his son Spero (aka Spike) took over the little stand in 1965 and soon we could phone ahead for our hot dogs. Spike continued...

At the Stories from the Bar event in April, the attorneys emphasized how much work was accomplished in convivial groups at the lawyers' favorite watering holes. One of these was Ye Olde Oyster Bar on Prichard Street. It was designed to reproduce the atmosphere of a European Tavern of the 1500's.

It was a warm space, with low wood ceilings and wooden booths and historic artifacts like a butter churn and a suit of armor. Its owner Robert Lufkin described it as the only one of its kind in the United States, with "ever burning candles" and "young, pleasing waitresses." His wife Meri was there every day to light the candles and serve as hostess.

Bob Lufkin was the kind of man to create a successful tavern. He was working as a restaurant manager by the time he was 16 and operated the Whalom Inn when he was 24. He served in Europe during World War I, and when he came back, he realized that the newly-passed national Prohibition laws were not being enforced. Lufkin later recalled, "I found myself drinking with congressmen and high officials." Though he had been in favor of Prohibition himself, he was shocked by the unsanitary conditions and bad liquor in speakeasies, so he began to work for legalization and the regulation and licensing of bars and taverns.

Lufkin founded the Massachusetts Retail Liquor Dealers Board of Trade, and was also a leader of national trade associations. Ultimately, he owned the Rose Garden at Whalom Park and Ye Olde Oyster Bar, while also serving as a lobbyist and community volunteer. On a humorous, but semi-serious business card, he hints at his many roles in "Bob's Lament." In it, he has been called "cursed and discussed, boycotted, talked to and talked about, hung up, held up and robbed and damn near trimmed and ruined and the only reason I am sticking around now is to see what the hell is coming next."

Located 5 Elm Street in 1933; Ye Olde Oyster Bar soon moved to 23 Prichard. Its eating and drinking areas were expanded to include the King's Courtyard (which was decorated with wall murals and hanging lanterns), the Tap, the Club Lounge and the George Washington Room.

Yogurt, tzatziki, souvlaki, even soured cream and feta cheese were not foods most of us ate growing up during the 40s and 50s in Fitchburg. However, we surely ate in restaurants owned and operated by people who were familiar with them. There were several places to eat on Main Street and many were owned and operated by Greek immigrants. For example, the Bon Ton Restaurant at 243-245 Main was owned by the Gelep family: Apostol, Constantin, and Demetrius. Unfortunately it was destroyed by fire in 1963.

Written by: Susan Navarre
(continued from page 4) running the stand after his father died in 1967 adding a variety of foods including fried clams and onion rings. In 1985 Spike sold to Andrew "Andy" Ventos of Leominster who ran it for 27 years. Andy is the grandson of one of Fitchburg's earlier Greek businessmen, Peter Plumpides. The stand is no longer owned and operated by members of the Greek community, but after several additions and changes, George's name still remains on the little stand at the corner of Summer and St. Bernard Streets.

If you desire traditional Greek food, be sure to attend the Greek Festival held at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church at 1319 Main Street on Saturday, September 19th. There you can enjoy souvliaki, moussaka, spanakopita, and baklava.

Written by: Simone Blake
(continued)
Letter from the Director

People are always stumping me with their questions: I went shopping recently and was asked “What’s the oldest house in Fitchburg?” I am happy to say that Fitchburg’s history is a popular topic of conversation in our city. I am always stumbling on a conversation where local history is being debated.

I can see why – on one hand, Fitchburg was reshaped and redesigned in the 20th century to reflect new ideas of centered urban design. The oldest mill buildings in stone and brick were pulled down to make room for new roads like Boulder Drive, and ponds and parks made way for the John Fitch Highway. New modern and post-modern buildings sprung up within the city’s colonial, Federalist and Victorian architecture.

On the other hand, vestiges of Fitchburg’s agricultural and colonial past surround us, and Victorian jewels like Richard Upjohn’s Christ Church and Fay Club continue the legacy of Fitchburg’s Golden Age of Industry into our own time. The Historical Society’s collection is also part of that extraordinary legacy from earlier generations. And now we continue their work…a work that all of us at the Historical Society feel honored to do.

Plus, it’s so much fun! This summer has zoomed by, in addition to our usual influx of tourists, we created a series of Historical Research labs, to bring together writers and nascent writers to do research side-by-side in our collections of primary source documents. They find exciting new topics to explore in our collections and share their ideas with us. The tourists do that, too: giving us a new view of Fitchburg. They come from all over the world to look up their ancestors in Fitchburg. They start out asking, "Why did the immigrants come straight to Fitchburg when they arrived in the U.S.?” They may not have heard of Fitchburg before, and yet it was such a magnet in the 1800’s and 1900’s. We share our records with them: home addresses, information on local factories, church and sports activities, even photos of their ancestors. It’s so much more than they expected to find, and they leave dazzled by their glimpse into another era that came alive for them here, because the collections in Fitchburg are so extensive.

We are their first introduction to Fitchburg, and they become increasingly curious about the city. More than one visitor has asked, “How did Fitchburg get so many beautiful and historic buildings? We don’t have anything like this at home!” Well, that’s a long and complex story, but we have given them a starting point during their visit to Fitchburg and its Historical Society.

Susan Navarre, Executive Director
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Upcoming Exhibitions: Winning the War and Winning Freedom

This fall, we are featuring a new story that joined our collection within the last year. It draws connections between a Fitchburg childhood in Cleghorn and the Allied victory in Europe during World War II. We will open the exhibition Felix Leger: A World War II Soldier from Cleghorn, on September 8, based on a large collection of memorabilia from Leger’s children.

Like so many soldiers, Felix Leger returned from his service in Europe and resumed ordinary life when he was demobilized after the war; but during the years before, he was an expert marksman and the recipient of a Purple Heart, a Bronze Star and a Croix de Guerre. He was part of the famous First Infantry division as it moved from the Battle of the Bulge and across Germany. He was witness to the historic trials at Nuremburg, where Nazi war criminals were brought to justice. In our exhibition, we will tell his story, with objects and documents from his own past, along with other World War II objects and documents from our collection.

In January and February, we will mount an exhibition that features some of our newly-researched resources on the Abolitionist movement and the important role Fitchburg played in the reform movements that led to the Civil War. The exhibition will coincide with our release of a new study guide to abolition resources in the collection of the Fitchburg Historical society, a project that has been funded by the Fitchburg Cultural Council. This project has thrilled our researchers, as they re-discovered evidence of visits to Fitchburg by reformers like Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison and Lucy Stone to local activist groups. I hope you will join us for these shows, as well as for a few relaxed afternoons seeing what stories YOU can find in our extraordinary collection of historical treasures.

Recent Exhibition:
Law and Justice in Fitchburg: the Worcester Superior Court
Photos courtesy of Nate Gallant

Sept. 2014 - Sept. 2015
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Bill McSheehy
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Anne O’Connor
James Reynolds

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Thanks to all the people who contributed time and effort to this newsletter: Simone Blake, Katrina Brown, Kathy Flynn, Susan Navarre, Megan Provencial, Ronald Watson, Nate Gallant and Shirley Wagner!
**Save The Date**

- **Felix Leger: A World War II Soldier from Cleghorn**
  A recipient of the Purple Heart, a Bronze Star and a Croix de Guerre, Felix Leger was part of the famous First Infantry division. This exhibition begins on **September 8** and highlights a new local World War II collection given to the Fitchburg Historical Society by the Leger family.

- **Fitchburg Historical Society Annual Meeting**
  **Wednesday, September 16, 2015 at 6 p.m.**
  Learn more about the Historical Society, as it celebrates its 123rd year, looking back and looking ahead.
  Free admission: the public is invited.

- **Volunteer Days at the Fitchburg Historical Society**
  **Thursday, September 17, 2015 at 9:00 a.m.**: United Way Annual Day of Caring
  **Wednesday, November 11, 2015 10:00 a.m.**: Volunteer Day to install Christmas Decorations at Historical Society.
  Get involved with the Historical Society on one or both of two special days this fall.

- **“Fans of Sisters”, Regional conference of Fan Association of North America**
  **Saturday, October 3, 10:30 – 3:30 p.m.**: The public is invited to join in discussion, viewing and identification of hand fans from the Sister Cities, Fitchburg and Leominster, in a meeting organized by the Fan Association of North America. Pre-arranged luncheon also available at separate cost: call to RSVP for lunch at 978-345-1157.

- **Annual December House Tour**
  **Saturday, December 5, 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**: The annual tradition and fundraiser returns!