



Brookline
Historical
Society

Incorporated April 29, 1901

Winter, 1993
newsletter

Fall meeting-- New research into the papers of the Rev. John Pierce, a chronicler of the people and events of early Brookline. Speaker: the Rev. David Johnson.

Sunday, March 7, 3 pm in Pierce Hall of First Parish Church, 382 Walnut St., Brookline.

Members, guests invited. Refreshments. For transportation, call 566-5747.

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President's Report

Membership-- If you haven't done so already, please respond to the annual billing of dues sent out recently (and duplicated on page 8). Payment of dues qualifies you as a voting member of the Historical Society. More important, it supports our programs and activities. For example:

The trees still stand-- The Historical Society is very proud of our role in fashioning a compromise regarding the three century-old trees that frame the Devotion House. The trees had been slated for removal by the town's Park and Forestry Division. Now all parties agree that the trees will remain in place and receive specific treatments to ensure their longevity.

The trees are located on the grounds of the Devotion House and mall facing Harvard Street. They are the oldest trees left in the area. Of the two sugar maples, one is located inside the Devotion House fence on the left side and the other is outside the fence on the right. The apple tree, which Steve Jerome tells me still produces fruit for the Devotion community, is to the side of the house.


Late last fall, the town examined the trees and came to the conclusion that they should be removed. Paul Willis, Director of the Parks and Forestry Division, agreed to delay any action while the Devotion Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) contracted with an arborists for a second opinion.

By January, there were four arborist reports available and no consensus. A preliminary decision by the town favored immediate removal.

The Historical Society and the PTO jointly sponsored a public meeting at the school. Steve
(continued on page 6)

BROOKLINE HISTORICAL SOCIETYTREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT

	<u>1991</u>		<u>1992</u>
<u>Cash on hand, Jan. 1:</u>			
Term deposit	\$30,642.50		\$33,082.69
Money market	1,715.85		1,813.57
Savings acct.	8,069.77		8,528.39
C.H. Blanchard			
Mem'l Fund	1,593.81		1,684.34
Fleet Bank	5,022.91		7,355.25
Checks on hand	<u>309.23</u>	\$47,354.07	<u>-----</u> \$52,464.24
<u>Income Year Ended Dec. 31:</u>			
Dues & contrib.	2,790.00		2,341.63
Grant			1,800.00
Sale of books	500.00		570.95
D. Wallace Trust	0		511.82
Interest earned	3,413.26		2,448.44
New London Trip	624.00		0
Fuel advance	200.00		0
Insurance refund	496.00		0
Miscellaneous	<u>115.00</u>	8,138.26	<u>0.</u> 7,672.84
		55,492.33	60,137.08
<u>Payments:</u>			
Printing & typing	973.38		490.33
Postage & mailings	355.38		246.15
New London Trip	672.36		0
Security	192.00		0
Meeting expenses	93.06		126.50
Telephone	0		138.43
Insurance	0		2,884.00
Vault	110.00		110.00
Book & catalogues			
purchased	120.00		0
Filing & prof. fees	150.00		80.00
Supplies & misc.	154.41		425.54
Dues & contributions	207.50		25.00
Grand program expense	0		500.00
Repair	<u>0</u>	<u>3,028.09</u>	<u>100.00</u> 5,125.95
<u>Balance, Dec. 31:</u>			
Term deposit	33,082.69		50,320.51
Savings account	8,528.39		0
Money market	1,813.57		0
Fleet Bank	7,355.25		2,912.02
C.H. Blanchard			
Mem'l Fund	1,684.34		1,748.60
Checks on hand	<u>0</u>	<u>\$52,464.24</u>	<u>30.00</u> \$55,011.13

Respectfully submitted,  George M. Lezberg, Treasurer
January 29, 1992

The Material and Mental World of an 18th Century professional

(Taken from a talk by David Jaffee given to the Brookline Historical Society, Sunday, Oct. 25, 1992. Jaffee, of the City College of New York, was scholar-in-residence with BHS during 1992.)

Like many of you, I feel the Devotions are part of my life. When I first saw the portraits of Ebenezer and Martha I knew I was in the presence of powerful images -- transported back to the 18th Century and a different world. The realism of the portraits ushered me into Ebenezer's library; even the titles on the books were faithfully recorded. The artist, Winthrop Chandler, was a so-called folk artist, but the more I learned, the more I saw him as an isolated craftsman, swept away by the industrial revolution. So began a personal project -- my exploration of the commercialization of craft production in the decades after the American Revolution.

Cindy Robinson of the Bay State Historical League put me in touch with Steve Jerome of the Brookline Historical Society, and I learned about the treasure trove of Devotion material in Brookline. Thanks to Deborah Abraham of the Brookline Public Library and Henry Bowers of the Scotland (Connecticut) Historical Society, I was able to touch and read the very books of the Devotion portraits, signed by Ebenezer and other family members.

In the Devotions can be found the mental world and cultural order of a rural, intellectual, and professional leader. The portraits provide entry to a host of historical issues: the Great Awakening and the American Revolution; the social life of a village elite and the construction of a cultural order in 18th Century New England; and the place of artifacts of private commercial life in the broader historical context.

Ebenezer was of the fourth generation of Devotions in the new world -- it was his great grandfather, Edward Devotion, who settled

in "Muddy River, a part of Boston" (now Brookline) in 1645. Born in Suffield, Connecticut, Ebenezer attended Yale College, then populated by about 80 students with a teaching staff of the rector and two tutors. The first four days of each Yale freshman's week were devoted to Greek and Hebrew and review of Latin. Friday and Saturday were given to study of rhetoric, oratory, ethics and theology. Prospective ministers were in the majority. They tended to be sons of securely established farmers from older communities.

Ebenezer must have taken well to his training. Upon graduation in 1732, he was invited by the parish of Scotland in Windham, Conn., a thriving town which, since its founding in 1682, had grown to have its own meeting house and market. In 1735, at age 21, he was ordained, and shortly thereafter he married Martha Lathrop, the daughter of a prominent Scotland family. It was not uncommon for a minister to marry himself to a community in this manner, at a time when family and kin were the center of all social life. In fact, Rev. Devotion's successor, Rev. James Cogswell, married his widow many years later, thus connecting himself to an extensive network of Lathrops and Devotions (and Huntingtons as well).

In 1735, the year of Ebenezer's ordination, a movement was touched off that would change the cultural landscape of New England. The Congregational Church had been under the disciplined control of ministers, like Devotion, who taught that Christian behavior, guided by rational (and sometimes longwinded) exegesis of Biblical texts, was the key to membership in the community of saints. But in Northampton, Mass., the Rev. Jonathan Edwards led an enthusiastic revival that swept down the Connecticut River Valley and into the back country. He emphasized faith over acts, and the individual over established authority.

It is easy to imagine how challenged Devotion must have been by the Great Awakening. He was a man of culture and learning who had turned away from the harsh Calvinism of the original settlers. His preachings, rather than emphasizing the innate evil of man and overwhelming power

of God, offered the hope that man's reason and religious knowledge could lead him to salvation, with the assistance of divine grace.

Set against this tradition, the revivalist preacher George Whitfield offered the power of oratory, not reasoned theology, and the promise of a personal relationship with God, not reliant on ministerial intervention. Followers who heard the message to trust their own "inner light" were less inclined to bend to the old religious elites.

The "old lights" knew when they were threatened. In 1742, the Connecticut Assembly banned traveling preachers. In 1744, Devotion and other ministers from Windham signed a declaration against itinerants who "have for some times past and in diverse places in this country gone about recently publicly preaching the gospel ... having no better warrant than a profession of an inward call and motion of the holy ghost."

In a 1746 pamphlet, Devotion answered the grievances of a Separatist church of Scotland. For years afterward, every Sunday he would send his negro slave to the Separatist minister with written orders forbidding him to preach inside the town limits. Devotion didn't waver in his conviction that the church's job was to stiffen the ethical spine of society and lead people to live a decent life, while avoiding fruitless speculation about the spiritual condition of the heart.

The link between the Great Awakening and the American Revolution can be traced in Devotion's response. To fortify his claim to authority, he relied on the language of political ideology. His defense of the established social order was aimed equally at the revivalist threat and the oppression of the British crown, and increasingly he spoke in terms of the chains of slavery, yoke of tyranny and natural rights. During the Stamp Act crisis, his "new light" neighbors saw no inconsistency in choosing an "old light" preacher to stand up for their rights against the orders of a distant king.

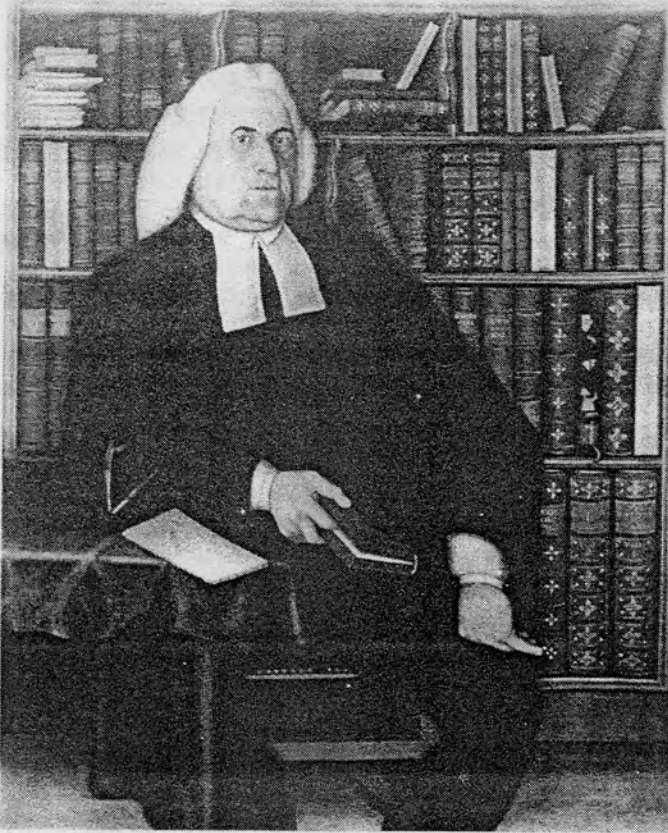
In a 1766 pamphlet, Devotion maintained that Parliament did not have "compleat and full jurisdiction over the property and person of

every inhabitant of the colonies." In proposing that certain liberties were granted by the colonial charters, he translated into secular terms the Congregational church's basis in a social covenant, a tradition he honored until his death in 1771.

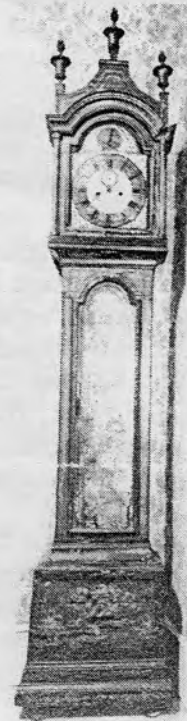
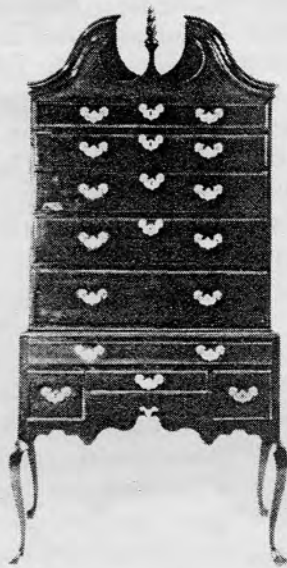
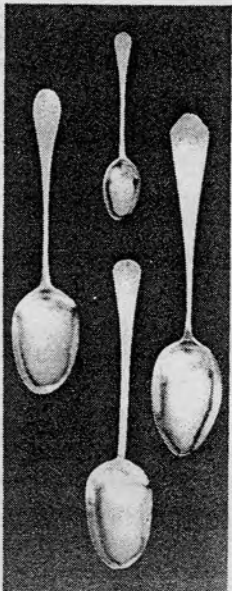
In the background of the Devotion portraits and in the preserved artifacts of their home life is the evidence of a third great upheaval of Ebenezer's time: the consumer revolution. Industrial production of mass goods in Britain coincided with economic expansion in the colonies following the French and Indian war. The trade ads that flourished on the front pages of colonial newspapers mark the social change. At the same time as consumer behavior was becoming standardized, American tastes were increasingly Anglicized. Tea went from luxury to necessity. The colonial gentry, to maintain its status, turned to material possessions to differentiate themselves from their neighbors.

Consider Ebenezer Devotion's books, of which we have a record in his portrait and in the inventory left at his death. The 50 bound volumes include sermons, Biblical commentaries, Hebrew texts, and works of history, philosophy, science, law and literature. Represented are Locke and Newton as well as the American Samuel Willard and the Laws of Connecticut; London magazines as well as American magazines. Most striking are the texts that link this minister in the hinterlands of Connecticut to European culture. Ebenezer's books mark him as a cultural and social leader.

Devotion's household goods are also instructive. The chair in which Ebenezer is portrayed is an expensive type, with leather upholstered rails. His possessions at his death included six leather-bottomed chairs, as well as a tea table, a high chest, a William and Mary desk, prints, pictures and maps, a silver tankard with spoon and tea tongs, three sets of teacups and saucers, and elaborate tea ware. The Chandler portraits themselves were a testament to wealth and refinement. The linkage of possessions to status claims marked a transition to a changed society in which consumer goods were the props by which new elites fashioned themselves.



WINTHROP CHANDLER portrait of the Rev. Ebenezer Devotion and items from Brookline's Devotion House -- (bottom left) Devotion Family silver tablespoons and teaspoons; (center) cherry, pine and chestnut high chest; and (right) tall clock in oak case with japanning on red ground.



President's Report

(continued from page 1)

Jerome provided us with a brief slide presentation on the history of the trees. A number of Devotion parents spoke in favor of maintaining the trees. One of the PTO's major concerns was this fall's ceremony for the 100th anniversary of the school.

Two members of the Tree Planting Committee were present, along with Public Works Commissioner Tom DeMaio and Paul Willis. Everyone agreed that the trees were not going to last forever. However, they have several years of life left, if they receive proper care.

The compromise finally accepted allows the trees to remain with an intensive maintenance program and phased replacement plan for the future. The trees will be cabled for better support and safety, and pruned as soon as possible. In addition, soil testing, fertilizing and root aeration will be implemented.

A special committee was formed that included members from the Historical Society, Devotion PTO, Tree Planting Committee and local residents. The committee will informally oversee the maintenance program and plan for the future. Other issues may include a change to the Devotion House fence so as to better protect the trees. The fence is scheduled to be replaced next year using a Community Development Block Grant and funds raised by the garden clubs.

By working together, our actions have helped to preserve the historical and aesthetic quality of the Devotion Mall. I would like to thank Jeannette Feuer, co-president, Devotion School PTO; Bob Kramer, chairman of the Tree Planting Committee; Tom DeMaio, and Paul Willis for their willingness to work together for the entire Devotion community.

Gifts-- photographs of the Devotion House trees given by Helen McIntosh; color sketch of the back of Devotion House based on a late 19th century photograph presented by artist Bob Smallidge of Peabody.

Thank you-- To Mrs. Dorothy Baldini, president, Chestnut Hill Garden Club, for organizing the campaign to implement a colonial garden for Devotion House.

-- Chris Crowley

Curator's Report

Grants, research, increased classroom visits and attendance at Society meetings, and long-awaited repairs at Devotion House are among the highlights of 1992.

Grant--The Scholar-in-Residence Program enabled the Society to benefit from the research of Dr. David Jaffee of the City College of New York, History Department. The Mass. Foundation for the Humanities grant provided a generous stipend to Dr. Jaffee, who spent many hours in the closed stacks of the library studying approximately 100 books from the library of the Rev. Ebenezer Devotion and his family. He also studied other objects and met with teachers to discuss application of his research to elementary and secondary students. Dr. Jaffe and I visited the Scotland (Conn.) Historical Society on Aug. 13 to study other Devotion family artifacts. The research will bear fruit in a future report on Dr. Jaffee's findings.

School Programs and Events-- Over 375 students from the Devotion, Heath and Pierce schools toured Devotion House, many using newly-devised curriculum worksheets to enhance their learning experience. Students in my Adult Education course on "The American House" visited Devotion House after a walking tour of selected houses between the High School and Coolidge Corner last April. In October, 15 graduate students from the BU Preservation Studies Program toured the house as part of their American architecture course. On Aug. 31 I guided the new Brookline Schools faculty on a bus tour to all the schools and historic sites in the town. Last March I met with Jo Sullivan, elementary schools social studies coordinator, and Carla Benka and Greer Hardwicke to discuss ways we can serve the new social studies curriculum which emphasizes heritage education.

Dear Mr. Jerome

I really liked the tour you gave us. I am amazed how well you kept that house. I am surprised you still have the letters that were written back in 1732. I really enjoyed your tour and I hope you have an exciting time speaking about the Devotion House with other children.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Savage



The Brookline Community Fund, Friends of the Preservation Commission and the Newcomers Club all held events at Devotion House. I presented "The Brookline Story," a slide show prepared by Ted Kingsbury and Jean Kramer, to school and senior citizen groups, as well as to the consultants planning the sesquicentennial of the high school. Last May, I led a tour of Brookline country estates following a symposium on this topic held at Faulkner Farm. On Nov. 12, I joined several trustees at the first showing of "Isabel's Gift: The Story of Larz Anderson Park," a video produced by Mary Dewart which the Society had aided with a grant. I learned much at a Portraits Symposium at Old Sturbridge Village, as well as at meetings of the Association for Gravestone Studies and the Society of Architectural Historians. I also participated in a seven-part seminar on "Interpreting our Commonwealth: Massachusetts 200 Years Ago" sponsored last fall by the Bay State Historical League.

Building-- In September and October, much-needed repairs to the fence and front slope of the gambrel roof were completed by the Town DPW and Steen Bros. Contractors. In late fall, I assisted Claude Menders and David Torrey, architects, in their project to complete a Historic Buildings Preservation and Maintenance Study endorsed by the Society last spring. The completed report will serve as a guide for future repairs to the House as well as other architecturally significant town properties. Leslie Larkin, David England, and the Curator met on two occasions, once with Ann Grady, an expert on First Period Architecture, to ascertain the

Dear Mr. J
Thank you very much for showing us around Devotion House and telling us of much of its history. It was very interesting and I hope I see both it and you again soon.
Thank you again,

Your friend,
David B

evidence of late 17th Century construction of the Devotion House.

While Devotion House has held up remarkably well during the worst winter since 1978, several needs have been brought to the attention of Building Commissioner James Nickerson.

Museum and Research-- Special thanks to Nancy Peabody for handling the production of a color transparency of the Jonathan Devotion miniature, first published in the October issue of "Antiques" in an article on "Mary Way's Dressed Miniatures" by William Lamson Warren. I have answered queries on many Brookline historical topics and am grateful to Deborah Abraham of the library and Carla Benka and Greer Hardwicke of the Preservation Commission for assistance with research.

Over 75 visitors attended the Patriot's Day open house on April 20. Thanks to The Brookline Florist and Susan Cunningham for assistance with decorations and refreshments.

Grounds-- I attended several meetings of the Devotion Playground Committee following the successful application for CDBG funds. While garden clubs plan a colonial garden for Devotion House, archaeologists Mary Beaudry, Karen Metheny and Steven Pendery have been contacted about a possible dig, perhaps involving Devotion students, prior to landscaping improvements.

Special Gifts of time, equipment (a filing cabinet is needed for BHS records) and funds (for conservation materials and curriculum kits) are always appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Jerome