



March 2010

The Big Dig of 1848: The Brookline Reservoir & the Cochituate Aqueduct

Annual Meeting of the Brookline Historical Society
Sunday, March 28, 2010, at 2 pm
Hunneman Hall, Brookline Public Library, 361 Washington Street



The Brookline Reservoir and its Gatehouse

The Cochituate Aqueduct, built between 1846 and 1848, brought clean water 15 miles from Lake Cochituate to the Brookline Reservoir for distribution to the City of Boston.

Join architectural historian Dennis DeWitt for the story of the reservoir and its historic gatehouse and their role in one of the largest public works projects of its time.

Refreshments will be served
The program will be preceded by a brief business meeting

<http://brooklinehistoricalsociety.org>

Water, Water, Everywhere: How Brookline Got Its Water
On display in the lobby exhibit cases
of the Brookline Public Library through March 28th



Boston's first public water supply came through the Brookline Reservoir and its historic gatehouse in the 1840s. (The subject of our Annual Meeting, March 28th.) Thirty years later Brookline got its own supply, pumping water from the Charles River in West Roxbury to a reservoir on Fisher Hill for distribution to the Town.

Images and artifacts from both of these public water projects are on display in the lobby of the Main Library through March 28th. This exhibit was developed by the Brookline Historical Society with help from the Brookline Water Department, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, and the collections of the Library.

Coming in April & May

Join us at the Devotion House on Patriot's Day, April 19th, for an open house and the annual visit of "William Dawes" in a recreation of Dawes' ride through Brookline on his way to Lexington in 1775. House tours begin at 9:30, followed by the expected arrival of Dawes on horseback at 10:15, with music and activities to follow.

In May, Society President Ken Liss will offer a members-only multimedia presentation on three figures from Brookline's past who are little-known today but were celebrated in their own time. (Details to come.)

A Busy Winter at the Devotion House: Sprucing Up for Spring

Even though the Devotion house has looked quiet and sleepy on the outside this winter while we are on hiatus from our regular tours, we have actually been hard at work inside.

For some years now, the ceiling in the old kitchen has been looking rough with peeling paint and bulging plaster. Though the Town and the Historical Society, the two stewards of the house, have long wanted to correct this situation, since the Devotion House is a historic structure, we had to make sure we proceeded with the utmost care.

We called in Walter Beebe of Essex Restoration, one of the area's premier historic preservation specialists. Walter told us that in the areas that looked most problematic the plaster had actually pulled away from the lath boards which had been intended to hold it in place.

Upon further inspection, he discovered that the Devotion House, like many other early Brookline houses, had been underbuilt. While the Devotion House has some post and beam supports that are eight-and-a-half inches square - some are even ten inches thick, much larger than they need to be to hold up a structure of this size - the joists that run between them are undersized. This early cost-cutting measure gives the building a certain "bounce" that may have played a part in loosening the plaster.

It was decided that while the plaster was down for restoration, newer joists could be "sistered", or placed side by side, with the older joists, in order to enhance the

stability of the building. Hopefully this will also keep the new plaster from loosening like the old plaster, as it will reduce the "bounce." This solution was also used between the basement and the first floor during an earlier restoration.

Bright and early on a late winter Friday morning, Walter and his team arrived and began to work. First they had to remove the old, failing plaster ceiling. When this came down, some interesting things were discovered in the space between the ceiling and the floor of the room above--including some vintage corn cobs, smuggled up there by rodents of yore.



Next they added the sister joists. Finally, they put the ceiling back up. Master plasterer Steve and his assistant Henry replastered the ceiling in two hours. With a fresh coat of paint applied only two weeks after we began, we are ready to show off this restored ceiling when we reopen for tours on Patriots Day.

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This summer you may notice other restoration work occurring at the Devotion House, including reshingling of the roof. We hope you will stop by and visit with us to see the work and learn more about our plans.

Special thanks to the Charlie Simmons of the Brookline Building Department and Greer Hardwicke of the Planning Department. Through their efforts and those of the Society and the Essex team hopefully the Devotion House will be around for many more centuries to come!



A view of some of the original Devotion House beams with new support in place.

Other Upcoming Programs of Note

Stained Glass Windows at the First Parish Church Saturday, March 27th, at 2 pm at First Parish

The First Parish Stained Glass Committee will present a tour and discussion of the unique collection of American Stained Glass Windows in the church's sanctuary. Virginia Raguin, Professor of Art History at the College of the Holy Cross and First Parish's own historian, Francis G. Hutchins, will guide visitors through the collection installed between 1895 and 1945.

Details at

<http://www.firstparishinbrookline.org/pdf/stainedglassinvitation.pdf>



Turning the World Upside Down: The Grimke Sisters—Slaveholders' Daughters Turned Abolitionists

Sunday, March 28th, 4-6 pm at Newbury College

The Brookline League of Women Voters and the Trustees of the Sara K Wallace Fund for Voter Education present a program on the Grimke Sisters (portrayed by Lani Peterson and Susan Lenoe) and their effort to spread the anti-slavery message in Massachusetts in the 1830s..

Details and ticket costs at <http://lwvbrookline.org/calendar.html>

Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North

Sunday, April 25th, at Hunneman Hall, Brookline Public Library

Hidden Brookline presents the film *Traces of the Trade* about a journey with a New England family to points on the slavery triangle—from New England to Africa and the Caribbean—as they discover that they are the descendants of the largest slave-trading family in the U.S. The program will also include a discussion led by Dmitry Anseleme of Facing History and Ourselves.

For more information contact Steve Bressler, Hidden Brookline, at 617-730-2330 or sbressler@brooklinema.gov