



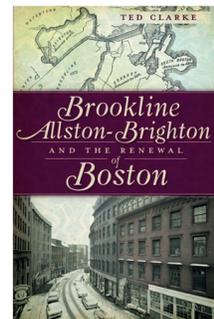
March 2011

**Come Help Us Celebrate
the 110th Birthday
of the Brookline Historical Society**



Annual Meeting
Sunday, March 13, 2011 at 2 pm
in Hunneman Hall
Brookline Public Library
361 Washington Street

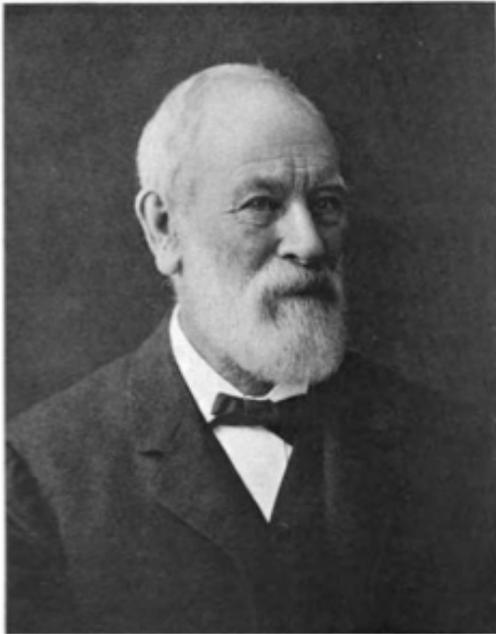
Guest Speaker
Ted Clarke
Author of *Brookline,*
Allston-Brighton and the
Renewal of Boston



Refreshments will be served
The presentation will be preceded by a brief business meeting.

In the Beginning: The Brookline Historical Society in 1901

The Brookline Historical Society held its first meeting in April 1901 in the Selectmen's Room of the old Town Hall on Washington Street. There were 15 charter members, led by President Rufus Candage.



Rufus G.F. Candage, first president of the Brookline Historical Society

The purpose of the Society, as stated in its by-laws, was:

“the study of the history of the town of Brookline, Massachusetts, its societies, organizations, families, individuals, events; the collection and preservation of its antiquities, the establishment and maintenance of an historical library, and the publication from time to time of such information relating to the same as shall be deemed expedient.”

The incorporation of the Society that month came 10 years after an earlier attempt to form such an organization. As Candage told the annual meeting in 1902, the 1891 effort including the adoption of by-laws, election of officers, and drawing of articles of incorporation, but “the certificate from the State House was not obtained because it was not asked for by the person having the matter in charge and the Society's incorporation was held in abeyance.”

(A later president, Elmer Cappers, speculated in 1973 that “the person who had been remiss in making application to the State House was possibly sitting in the audience [at the 1902 meeting] and the usually very forthright Captain Candage was walking on egg shells.”)

A Brookline Historical Publications Society, under the leadership of Charles Bolton of the Brookline Public Library was formed in 1895, an organization that produced pamphlets but, wrote Bolton had “no officers, no elections, no meetings, and no rules.”

The formation of the Historical Society in 1901 led to regular meetings, monthly at first and later 3-4 times per year. In 1911, the Society took over management of the Town-owned Edward Devotion House, which remains the headquarters of the organization to this day.

For more on the early history of the Brookline Historical Society, see Elmer Cappers report in the 1973 BHS Proceedings, available on the Society's Web site at

<http://brooklinehistoricalsociety.org>.

The Seal & Certificate of the Historical Society

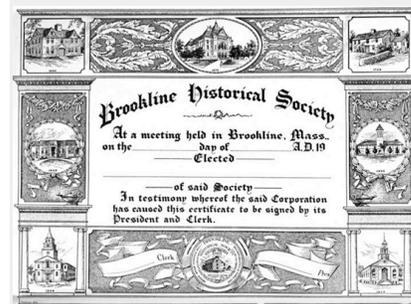


Among the first actions of the newly formed Brookline Historical Society in 1901 were the creation of a seal and a membership certificate.

As President Candage noted in the 1902 Proceedings, the seal, showing the Edward Devotion House, was “drawn by a citizen of the town from a photograph, engraved by another citizen, and is an appropriate device for the seal of the Society. As such, may it have a long and useful career, and may the old house long continue to be an historical landmark of our town!” (And indeed it has!)

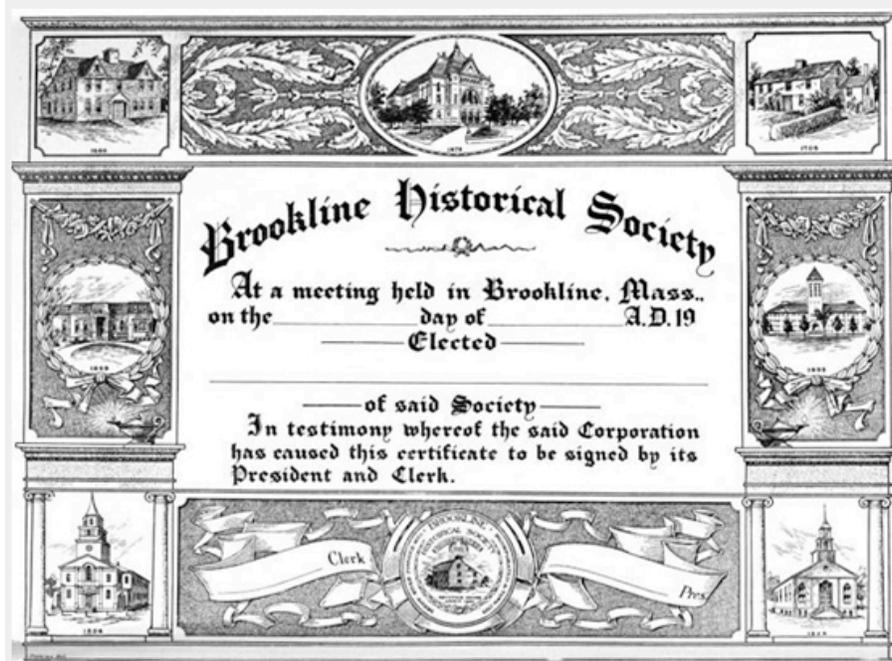
The membership certificate, printed from an engraved plate made by William J. Dana for the Society (and still in our possession) was presented to new members annually for many years.

The border of the certificate shows eight historic structures, only four of which were still standing in 1901 and only one of which, the Edward Devotion House, remains today.



Shown clockwise from top left, are:

- The **Aspinwall House**, built in 1660 and taken down in 1891.
- The **1873 Town Hall**, torn down to make way for the new Town Hall in the 1960s.
- The **Gardner House**, which stood on Boylston Street from 1705 to 1885.
- The **1895 High School** building on Greenough Street, destroyed in a fire in 1936.
- The **First Baptist Church**, which stood on Harvard Street from 1828 to 1858.
- The **Edward Devotion House**.
- The second building of the **First Parish Church**, which stood from 1806 to 1848.
- The **1869 Public Library**, replaced by the current Library in 1910.



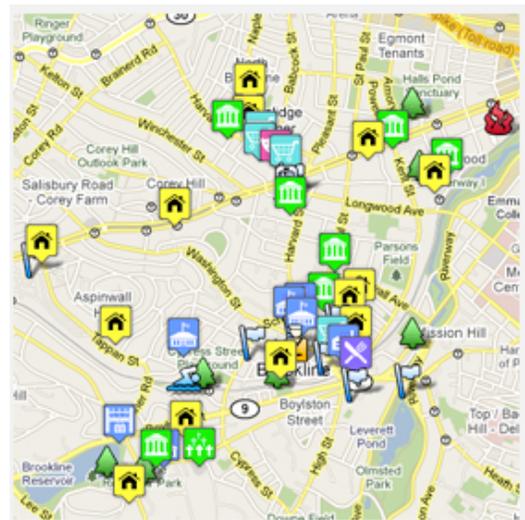
A Virtual Walking Tour Of Brookline History

<http://tinyurl.com/brooklinehistorymap>

Are you looking for a new way to explore Brookline's past? Anyone with an interest in the town's rich history can now take a virtual walking tour via our new online map.

The map presents pictures and descriptions (with links for more information) about homes, commercial buildings, churches and synagogues, schools, neighborhoods, parks, and other parts of the town.

Most of the sites marked on the map are in Brookline Village, Coolidge Corner, Longwood, and the area around the First Parish Church and the old Village Green. Other sites and other areas of Brookline are being added, helping to bring to light stories behind familiar and not-so-familiar places in town.



The virtual tour, created using Google Maps, can be viewed from any computer. Smartphone users can follow the tour on their mobile devices, even using GPS to find information about locations while standing before them.

Coming in April: Patriot's Day Visit of "William Dawes"



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 am, followed by the expected arrival of Dawes on horseback at 10:50 am, with music and activities to follow.

Other Upcoming Programs of Note



Grand Opening of the Waterworks Museum at the Chestnut Hill Reservoir Sunday, March 27, 11 am to 2 pm

Discover Boston's water system history, tour the Great Engines Hall, engage with costumed guides, view presentations, enjoy family activities, music, and refreshments. More details at <http://tinyurl.com/waterworksopening>

Marcia Estabrook as Escaped Slave Ellen Craft Saturday, April 2, at 2 pm at Hunneman Hall, Brookline Public Library

Actress Marcia Estabrook will reprise her one-woman performance as escaped Georgia slave Ellen Craft who found refuge and support in Brookline. Sponsored by the Hidden Brookline Committee, a project of the Human Relations-Youth Resources Commission.



A New Roof for the Devotion House

Faithful readers of the Brookline Historical Society newsletter may remember that in our last issue we described the restoration of the plaster ceiling in the Devotion House museum's hearth room. We are quite fortunate that the Town was able to fund a second restoration project this past summer. In June, McKenna Roofing began the process of re-shingling the roof at the Devotion House. This project desperately needed to be done, as water was penetrating the building envelope (the outer shell of the house) regularly in heavy rains and we would often lose shingles in windy storms.



The new roof of the Devotion House

As the Devotion House is a historic building, it is important to maintain its historic appearance, of which the wood shingle roof is an element. McKenna suggested using red cedar, as these are amongst the most durable wood shingles available. Additionally, the longevity of the roof was increased by using double strapping along the first four feet of the roof to allow air circulation on both sides of the shingles. Installing the

shingles this way helps them dry more quickly after a rainstorm.

While inspecting the roof to prepare for shingling, it was noticed that the chimney was also badly in need of restoration. There was a crack appearing in the top few layers of the brick on the western side and the chimney was tilting in the opposite direction. Preservation Commissioner and consultant Dr. Judith Selwyn of Preservation Technology Associates agreed to take a look at the chimney. Working with master mason Robert D'Earmo, Dr. Selwyn recommended an appropriate mix of sand, mortar and pigment to match the original mixture.

In addition to matching the historic look, this ensured that the mortar is not too strong for the over 250 year-old brick.



Dr. Judith Selwyn with James and Michael McKenna on the roof of the Devotion House

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Dr. Selwyn also recommended two other mechanisms to minimize the amount of future water penetration: pargeing, or adding a layer of mortar to the interior of the chimney, and adding an angled pan inside the chimney that directs any water that accumulates there to the outside wall. In order to further direct water away from the Devotion House, the wooden gutters were lined with copper and the diameter of downspout was increased, which improved their efficiency. Finally, when work on the

chimney was done, the flues were cleaned.

All the work on the roof and chimney was complete in time to withstand the extraordinary amount of snow we got this winter. We are happy to report that the roof is holding up quite well. With the new work and the ongoing efforts of Charlie Simmons of the Building Department and his office in maintaining the Devotion House, it will continue to do so for many years ahead.



The new roof on the Edward Devotion House was completed in time to protect the historic building from the harsh winter of 2010-11.

From Our Collections

Historical Society volunteers Julie Barry and Marilyn Hershfield have each been working, in different ways, with items from the collections of the Society. In the following reports, Julie and Marilyn offer a glimpse of what they have found.

A Remnant of a Tragic Fire

This past summer, Collections Intern Julie Barry undertook a collections cataloguing project at the Devotion House in Coolidge Corner. Julie holds an M.A. in Art History and Museum Studies from Tufts University and is a former resident of Brookline. Beginning in April 2010 Julie processed over two hundred historical objects from the Devotion House as part of an ongoing effort to catalogue the site's entire collection. In this article, she describes the project and one of the more unusual items in the collection.

This initial phase of the project focused on a selection of objects stored in two glass front cabinets in the Historical Society office. The objects catalogued included ceramics, glassware, silverware, antique toys, daguerreotypes, silhouette portraits, and even a few pairs of antique spectacles. Most of these items date from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Each object was carefully photographed, manually tagged with an accession number, and entered into the Society's electronic Past Perfect database. In total, 214 separate objects were catalogued over the course of five months.

The project encompassed a wide range of objects from Brookline's past, each with its own unique story to tell. One of the most interesting objects we came across in the course of this project was an odd stalagmite-shaped mass of lead.

This mysterious object was revealed to be the melted remnants of a clock weight from Brookline's First Presbyterian Church.



Melted Clock Weight from Church

The church, located between Harvard and Holden Streets at Pierce Street, was tragically destroyed in a fire on New Year's Eve 1960-61. The lead remnant, given to the Brookline Historical Society on behalf of Chief Gettings of the Brookline Fire Department, was presumably formed by the heat of the fire melting the lead weights of the famous old clock in the church's steeple.

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The 1961 Proceedings of the Brookline Historical Society record the donation of the artifact and include a short description of the fire:

"New Year's Eve, 1961, will be remembered by many people in Brookline, when fire broke out in the First Presbyterian Church on Harvard Street shortly after midnight and destroyed a prominent landmark erected in 1858. This fire quickly spread to the steeple and flames reached about 130 feet high as the church was consumed by fire in three hours. This fire was witnessed by thousands of greater Boston people celebrating the New Year

and a general feeling of sadness prevailed as they saw this lovely old church disintegrate in flames and pass into history to become but a memory to this generation."

The lead remnant provides a very tangible connection to this tragic event from Brookline's past. The realization that this misshapen clump of lead was once a clock weight immediately conveys the magnitude and heat of a fire that occurred fifty years ago. This fascinating object is just one of many uncovered in the course of the collections cataloguing project at the Devotion House.

Julie Barry



The New Year's Eve fire of 1960-61 destroyed the hundred-year-old First Presbyterian Church on Harvard Street in Brookline Village (Brookline Historical Society photo)

Tortoise Shell Comb

Longtime volunteer Marilyn Hershfield has been guiding visitors through the Edward Devotion House for several years, pointing out some of the many objects on display. Here she tells the story of one of her favorites.

Snuggled comfortably in an open ended container in the second floor bedroom "chamber" of the Devotion House, is a lovely late 19th century tortoise shell comb. It is in perfect condition, made probably by New England craftsmen and donated by a Brookline resident, Louisa Fuller (Wilson) Ware of 82 High St. It belonged to Caroline Weld Fuller Farrer, grandmother of Louisa Ware.

It is considered a perfect example of an American artifact of personal adornment, a hair accessory. Americans ordered and purchased combs to ornament their hair, and the English brought them on their ships to sell to the Americans prior to the Revolutionary War. As the war progressed and the British armies were finally defeated, imports of such description were no longer sold from their ships. Instead the very lucrative business of making salable combs was taken over by American craftsmen.

Such work was done in West Newbury, Leominster and Needham. As a matter of slightly questioned fact, the first American combs were made by cleaning, heating, shaping and cutting

probably from bone or horn and later from the more expensive tortoise shell.

Combs were used by men and women as far back as probably 9000 years. Egyptians, Roman, and Saxons have been discovered as the owners of combs decorated with animals or fables, made of gold, ivory, mother of pearl and whatever was at hand. Also, customs and ceremonies of past civilizations were artistically shown. And they were good omens often mentioned in wills and estates and valued as good luck charms if one was going on a long journey. Most combs were expected to last the lifetime of the owner.

The first resident of West Newbury who is honored with the beginning of the comb industry in America is Enoch Noyes in the 1780's. Enoch learned how to make combs from a German (Hessian) former soldier, a Mr. Cleland of General Burgoyne's army from the battle of Bennington, Vt. in the Revolutionary War. The industry progressed and by the 1830's and 1840's there were 30 comb shops in West Newbury. Hundreds of people were employed in bringing them to the public.

Look around your treasured belongings and see if you have a comb left by a doting member of your family. If you can't find a family heirloom, visit the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, other museums or the town of Leominster. Good luck!

Marilyn Hershfield