

Newsletter

of the Brookline Historical Society

FEBRUARY 1997

A Message from the President:

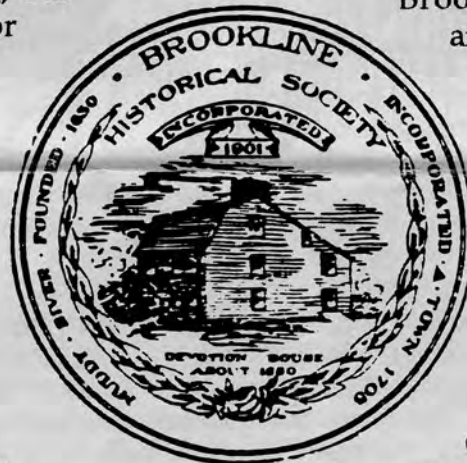
Thank you for your support of the Brookline Historical Society in 1996. This is a good opportunity to reflect on the events of the past year and the challenges that lie ahead in 1997.

We mourn the loss of two board members. George Lezberg, our ever faithful Treasurer for 13 years, and Leslie Larkin, a past president, are missed and fondly remembered, not the least for their service to BHS. We also note the death of long-time member, Mrs. Alice Badger, sister-in-law of Carolyn Wetherbee, and the historian and genealogist of her family.

Both the past and future of the Brookline Historical Society are linked with our three historic structures -- Edward Devotion House, Putterham School, and the Widow Harris House. This past year has brought us good news in the form of a \$30,000 appropriation for exterior repairs to the Edward Devotion House, with the prospect of additional funds for the other properties in future

years. Special thanks are due to Building Commissioner James Nickerson and the staff of the Brookline Preservation Commission for their efforts on behalf of the preservation of these valuable structures, including the reconstruction of the Devotion House bulkhead last spring.

The generosity of two sponsors -- the Brookline Cooperative Bank and Chobee Hoy Associates, is responsible for a year-long series of promotional ads for the Historical Society that you've probably noticed in the City Section of the Boston Sunday Globe. Stephen Jerome is also featured in a Brookline Cable Access production which will hopefully initiate a program series featuring Brookline's historic sites.



The candlelight tours of Devotion House during Preservation Week, at First Light, and on Dec. 4 and 6 were a tremendous success. I thank those of you who either assisted with the event or visited the house on those evenings.

If you are looking for gift ideas in 1997, a membership in the Brookline Historical
(please turn to page 7)

Longyear Museum -- The Story of a House and a Collection

By Thomas C. Proctor,
Assistant Director/ Curator

Today we are meeting in the music room, one of the 20 rooms added to the Longyear Mansion after it was moved from Marquette, Michigan to Fisher Hill. In this room we are surrounded by the paintings of artist Max Bohm. I call your attention to the three-panel mural - "Music in Nature."

The mural is in three panels (original canvasses measured 11'h x 8'w), with a continuous design, originally placed in arches so the viewer had the feeling of looking onto a scene outside. Mr. Bohm described it in a letter to Mary Beecher Longyear in 1915: "The color, the form, the masses, extend from panel to panel, cor[r]elated in idea and line all working together for Good, Happiness. The realization of Good, present and to come." In the same letter the artist mentions the main ideas in the mural as follows: "There is the murmuring brook, the wind in the trees. The chantey of the sailors, the music of the anvil. The voices of singing children and the oldest and most continuous sound in the world, that of the breaking waves."

The mural was commissioned By Mrs. Longyear in 1913 and completed by Max Bohm in 1916. Before being installed in the music room of the Longyear mansion on Fisher Hill later that year, the three canvasses were

exhibited at Knoedler's Gallery in New York City in October. There they were well received and highly praised. Max Bohm painted several murals, but considered this one his "most notable mural decoration." [For a recent examination of Max Bohm's work see American Art Review, Vol. VI, No. 5, 1994, p. 116 ff., "Max Bohm: Romantic American Visionary" by Charleen Akullian.]

1. The Longyears – who are they and where did they come from?

Mary Hawley Beecher was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1851. She was a distant relative of the famous New England preacher, Henry Ward Beecher.

Mary's childhood was spent in Milwaukee, and at the close of the Civil War the family moved to Augusta, Michigan. In her teens Mary studied to be a school teacher and eventually moved to Marquette, Michigan, in 1877 to pursue her profession.

In Marquette, Mary met John Munro Longyear who was working there as a "landlooker" -- reporting on the natural resources of lands that the Federal Government had turned over to the Sault St. Marie Canal Company. John was the son of Judge Wesley J. Longyear of Detroit, Michigan. His courageous nature, vision, judgment and industry served him well as one of the developers of the vast lumber and mineral resources of Michigan's upper peninsula. On one of his early explorations of that region one of his associates remarked to him: "John, you work like a fool." But that hard work paid off as he began, in 1885, the operation of his own iron mine, eventually



accumulating a fortune in this mining business. He even found time to serve two terms as mayor of Marquette in the 1890's!

Mary and John were married in Battle Creek, Michigan on January 4, 1879 and made their home in Marquette. They had seven children, three girls and four boys. Early in the 1890's Mrs. Longyear was introduced to Christian Science while struggling with the grief associated with the sudden death of an infant son.

2. The Longyear House – Its first construction and move from Marquette, Michigan to Brookline, Massachusetts ... more than an entry in Ripley's "Believe it or not"

1890 was also the year that found John and Mary Longyear commencing the construction of their half-million dollar home over-looking Lake Superior at Marquette, Michigan. Their 66-room mansion was occupied by the family in 1892.

But let us turn to John Longyear's own letters and autobiography to get his perspective on the building and ultimate moving of this brownstone mansion:

"In 1890, I began the erection of a stone house in Marquette, Michigan ...The house was finished and we moved in in October 1892. It was ... our home for about nine years, It was my wife's ambition to have the flat land between the bluff and the government property on Lighthouse Point made into a park and in 1896 I purchased the greater part of this property, having over one thousand feet of water-front

In 1900 the Marquette and Southeastern Railway was projected, the promoters proposing to ... run around the foot of the bluff on which the house stood. As this would ruin the plans we had in mind for the property we were opposed to it

My wife felt so strongly about this that she told citizens who were in promotion of the new road, as we were leaving for a trip to

Europe ... in June 1901, that, if the road should be built through her property, she would not return to Marquette.

The information that the condemnation proceedings had resulted in the awarding of the right-of-way to the railroad reached us in Norway

I gave the matter a good deal of thought during the next few weeks and the day before leaving Paris for home, ... I remarked to my wife that I believed I could demolish the house, move it to some other place and reerect it. The family were much attached to the house and she enthusiastically adopted the suggestion. I told her there were many things to be investigated before we could say we would do it,

I had no idea of making our idea public, The newspapers got hold of it and it was heralded all over the United States as a project decided upon. My wife expressed a preference for Brookline, Massachusetts, and I spent considerable time during the winter of 1901-02 looking over properties there I examined hundreds of properties in Brookline and other suburbs of Boston My preference was for the property on the summit of Fisher Hill, near the center of Brookline, but I said nothing of my preference until after my wife had also said she liked the Fisher Hill property better than any of the others

As I approached the project of demolishing and moving the house it looked more and more formidable and all through the year 1902 I tried to sell it as it stood.... Finding no likelihood of making a sale, in January 1903, ... began the demolition of the house and in June the stone, iron, rough window and door frames, etcetera, that is, all the materials wanted for construction were on the grounds on Fisher Hill."

The project was indeed immense! Each block of stone from the 66-room mansion was wrapped in straw and cloth and numbered and put in wooden crates. (In fact, we still have a few of these wooden shipping boxes with the original straw!) The entire dismantled

building was sent to Beaconsfield Station, Brookline, by two freight trains with a total of 190 cars. When the house was redesigned and reassembled on the Fisher Hill site it had grown from 66 to 88 rooms making the size of the house 50% larger than it was in Marquette. Notable additions to the house include the Music Room, South Porch, and servant's wing (for a staff of some 20 servants). The Longyear children living in the house when they moved in late March 1906 included: Helen, 21; Judith 20; Jack, 18; and Robert, 10. [Mr. Longyear died in 1922/Mrs. Longyear died in 1931.]

3. Mrs. Longyear's gathering of a collection and designing a museum facility -- a woman ahead of her time.

At the time Mrs. Longyear began her collecting of material about Mary Baker Eddy's life history and achievements in 1895, the field of historic preservation was in its infancy in the United States. For example -- the National Archives of the United States was not established until 1934; Colonial Williamsburg in 1926; Old Sturbridge Village in 1938; American Association of State and Local History in 1940; and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1949.

It should be also remarked that the task of historical preservation that Mrs. Longyear undertook and successfully achieved is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that the field of history was male-dominated (after all women did get the vote until 1920), and the material she sought to collect and preserve was not seen as "history" (that is, old enough to need collecting). However, she saw that unless the material was collected at that time it could be lost forever. In her diary Mrs. Longyear wrote in Jan. 1923:

The most important thing in the whole world at this time seems to me, is the preserving of the incidents and the authenticity of the history of the life of Mary Baker Eddy. How few, ... at the present time realize the great necessity of keeping the records of her early life

And thanks to Mrs. Longyear's foresight, today the core of our collection consists of the Baker Family Papers that document the childhood and young adult years of Mary Baker Eddy and her relationship with her parents and siblings and friends.

Had Mrs. Longyear not preserved these and other documentation we might well be turning biographers and the general public to contemporaries of Mrs. Eddy to try to piece together the early years of her life. (This was done by Prof. William Fowler in his biography of John Hancock, since no records specific to Hancock's childhood survived.)

Mrs. Longyear established the Longyear Foundation to care for the collection she was gathering in January 1923. By September of that year, she received plans that she had commissioned from the Chicago architectural firm of Samuel A. Marx and Earl H. Reed. The museum plan allowed for, among other things, the display of a bronze statue of Mary Baker Eddy which Cyrus Dallin had completed in 1922 for Mrs. Longyear. There would be a research library; a large exhibit hall for program and display of portraits; a gallery for historic photographs; a large gallery telling the story of Mrs. Eddy's life history; an index room for a catalog of the collection; a large basement storage area for the collection not currently on display.

Unfortunately, the cost of obtaining manuscripts, letters, photographs, artifacts, reminiscences, portraits, four historic houses in which Mrs. Eddy had lived -- combined with the stock market crash of 1929 (remember Mrs. Longyear died in 1931) -- left Mrs. Longyear with insufficient funds to build a museum during her lifetime.

It is clear from the minutes of the Longyear Foundation Trustee Meeting held on November 1, 1925 that Mrs. Longyear's desire to build an appropriate museum facility for her collection remained a priority. The Trustee minutes note:

Mrs. Longyear felt that the upkeep of her residence ... would be a tremendous weight on the trustees, and that the use of it for many



(Photo courtesy Longyear Historical Society)



(Photo courtesy Longyear Historical Society)

years to come would not warrant the great expenditure ... Mrs. Longyear said she wished to begin building ... a Museum in which to house and display the historical collection.

Mrs. Longyear never abandoned the desire for a proper museum facility for her collection, as can be seen in the fact that she had two more architectural plans for such a facility drawn up in 1926. One plan by W.L. Richardson is comparable in all significant details to her 1923 plan, but on a smaller less costly scale. The second plan by Gay and Proctor was even smaller and featured only a single 36 foot by 23 foot gallery. By February 1929, Mrs. Longyear requested and received from the Boston architectural firm of Gay and Proctor plans to alter three rooms in the lower floor of her Fisher Hill home to accommodate the display of the collection.

With Mrs. Longyear's death on March 14, 1931, the collection found its home, by default, in the Longyear's 88-room residence. By 1934, Longyear Foundation applied for and received incorporation in Massachusetts as a non-profit educational institution. Three years later, in 1937, the Longyear's mansion on Fisher Hill opened its doors as the only history museum with historic houses in Massachusetts and New Hampshire open to the public whose purpose is to tell the story of Mary Baker Eddy's life.

Mrs. Longyear's vision and desire for her collection is finally to be realized almost 73 years later in the plans for and building of a new museum facility on the corner of Boylston and Dunster Streets in Brookline. The new building concept expresses and fulfills many of Mrs. Longyear's hopes for a museum facility as expressed in her 1923 architectural plans for a museum building. Our team developing

the architectural, landscape and exhibit plans for this new facility include: Building Architect - Stopfel & Assoc. of Boston; Landscape Architect - Carol Johnson of Cambridge; Exhibit Designer - Ralph Applebaum & Assoc. of New York City.

(Presented Sunday, June 23, 1996. Brookline Historical Society Meeting Music Room, Longyear Museum, 120 Seaver St., Brookline, MA.)



*Mr. and Mrs. John Munro Longyear.
(Photo courtesy of Longyear Historical Society.)*



Members of Brookline Historical Society and guests at the Quadrangle, Springfield MA, during Oct. 26 1996 society bus trip. (See Curator's Report, p 7)

Curator's Report

The mission of our Historical Society, as I see it, is four-fold:

1. acquire Brookline history; 2. encourage the study of Brookline history; 3. preserve Brookline history, and, 4. explain Brookline history.

There is a role for every member and friend to participate in this mission. In the past year, it has been my privilege to extend the society to a larger community. There is much to celebrate:

-- open houses at Putterham School at Larz Anderson park for Preservation Week and Arts in the Park; also at Devotion House on Patriots Day. (Thanks to Lorraine Lee and Bennet Hammond for lovely music provided prior to the arrival of the horse-riders, and Susan Cunningham, as always, for gracious assistance with hospitality.)

-- open house at Devotion House as part of Brookline's First Light celebration of the fall/winter holiday season. (Thanks: Frances Alleman-Luce, Susan Cunningham and Whit Larrabee.) Helping with Candlelight tours were Frederic Clanagan and Nina Mark (12/3) and Jane Martin, Royal Wagner, David Johnson and Shirley Goldstein (12/5).

-- spring meeting on June 23 at the Longyear Museum thanks to Alan K. Lester and Thomas C. Proctor; winter meeting on January 28, thanks to the director and trustees of Brookline Library; and Bill Marchione and Charles Sullivan for assistance with slides.

-- fall meeting on November 10 at United Parish, thanks to Paula Stewart and Nancy Johnson.

On September 13, I was privileged to guide members of the Historic Winslow House Association (of Marshfield) on a tour of Brookline. Thanks to volunteers Elmer Cappers, Adelaide Cromwell, Elise Jorgensen, Nancy Peabody, Steve Pendery, Peggy Richardson, John Sears, Nina Thompson,

Dorothy Waldron, and especially Ellen Singer and Susan Porter for opening their historic homes to the group on a rainy day.

On October 26, a remarkable mild, sunny day, members and friends traveled to western Massachusetts to visit historic Storrowton Village, a restoration project undertaken in the early 1900s by Mrs. Helen Osborn Storrow, of Boston, and the Springfield Quadrangle, the distinguished group of museums noted for the breadth of collections --from Erastus Salisbury Field's unique mythological and allegorical interpretations of American history on canvas, to an important surviving plaster cast installation.

Special thanks to Dennis Picard of Storrowton and Judy Stearns of the Quadrangle.

It is impossible to thank everyone who helped in all of this, but the ongoing support of Steve Pendery, our president, and David Johnson, vice president, and Treasurer pro-tem Mark Chadbourne and our dedicated board of directors inspires me. Special thanks to Irene Hartz for her devoted hospitality at our meetings and generous kindness to the curator.

There is much to be done, and I look forward to meeting the challenges ahead with your support and assistance.

-- Stephen Jerome

President's Message

Continued from page 1

Society will be appreciated by young and old alike. A membership certificate will be sent, inscribed with the name of the new member.

Have you upgraded your home computer system or facsimile machine recently? The Historical Society is interested in your surplus computer or printer, and your donation may qualify for a tax deduction. Please call the curator, Stephen Jerome, at 566-5747, or me at 566-1764, for more information.

-- Steven Pendery

TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT

	1996		1995
Cash on hand, Jan. 1st:			
Term Deposit CD	\$50,236.30		\$51,951.34
Blanchard Meml Fund CD	\$1,950.20		\$1,842.94
Checking Account	\$3,703.56		\$480.05
Checks on hand	<u>\$0.00</u>		<u>\$955.00</u>
		<u>\$55,890.06</u>	<u>\$55,229.33</u>
Income Year End Dec 31st:			
Dues & Contributions	\$1,502.40		\$781.00
Sale of books	\$40.00		\$110.90
Heath painting contributions	\$215.00		\$500.00
Interest earned	\$3,282.76		\$2,917.96
Trip income	<u>\$676.00</u>		<u>\$1,125.00</u>
		<u>\$5,716.16</u>	<u>\$5,434.86</u>
		<u>\$61,606.22</u>	<u>\$60,664.19</u>
Payments:			
Printing & Typing	\$242.42	LINE 15	\$100.70 15
Postage & Mailings	\$119.10	15	\$272.76 15
Security	\$87.50	LINE 14	\$483.50 14
Meeting Expenses	\$502.67	15	\$194.50 15
Telephone	\$117.73	14	\$49.67 14
Insurance	\$1,449.00	14	\$1,454.00 14
Bank fees	\$137.20	16	\$192.81
Trip expenses	\$929.88	✓	\$1,179.50 ✓
Grant program expenses	\$0.00		\$432.69
Acquisitions/Books	\$215.00	15	\$0.00
Supplies & Misc.	\$30.94	16	\$414.00
Filing Fees	\$175.00		\$0.00
Memberships	<u>\$30.00</u>		<u>\$0.00</u>
		<u>\$4,036.44</u>	<u>\$4,774.13</u>
Balance, Dec 31st:			
Term Deposit CD	\$51,385.34	5.4 11/97	\$50,236.30
Blanchard Meml Fund CD	\$2,064.37	5.25 1/98?	\$1,950.20
Checking Account	<u>\$4,120.07</u>		<u>\$3,703.56</u>
		<u>\$57,569.78</u>	<u>\$55,890.06</u>

Respectfully submitted,

Mark E. Chadbourne,
Treasurer
February 5, 1997