

FRIENDS OF METHUEN HISTORY

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE METHUEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY & THE METHUEN MUSEUM OF HISTORY



A Note from
Our President,
Maureen Pollard



Opening Our World and Renewing Our Efforts

We hope you are all well as we deal with the ongoing challenges of life during a pandemic. We reopened the Methuen Museum of History at the beginning of June and have been there to greet our friends and neighbors every Saturday from noon to 2pm. Please stop by with your family and friends to get the tour and read about the history of Methuen. We look forward to welcoming you again!

Our first in-person Board Meeting was held on June 17th and we were proud to present the Frank and Martha Welch Memorial Scholarship to Ivan Rodriguez, an outstanding student at the Greater Lawrence Regional Technical High School.

More on this story on page X.

Our membership drive was initiated in early spring and we were encouraged to welcome some new members into our Society. We still receive monthly membership contributions, so if you've forgotten to reply to our requests, you still have the opportunity to do so! If it is easier, you can simply go to our website at methuenhistoricalsociety.org to download and send the application form or contribute directly through the website.

On July 4th we hosted our second annual reading of the Declaration of Independence at Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery across from Holy Family Hospital. This was such a successful event last year, that we're planning to make this ceremony an annual event. Many Americans have never read this historic document from beginning to end, so attendees found it very interesting and informative. It was a perfect thing to do with the family to mark the holiday!

The drawing for our Annual Raffle took place at the conclusion of the ceremony. The grand prize was one hundred, \$10 scratch tickets— a great holiday bonus, especially if one of those tickets was worth a million dollars! This year's winner, Ted Fairburn of Methuen, was present at the ceremony to accept his prize! (see photo on page X) Thank you to everyone who supported this year's fundraiser. Better luck next year!

2020 Preservation Award Presented

Win-Win Preservation Incentives
Help Make Preservation Profitable



Presenting this year's award (left to right) MHS board member and architect, Katherine Robinson, Kevin T. O'Brien, and MHS President, Maureen Pollard. | Photos courtesy: Methuen Life Magazine

In a Saturday morning ceremony on May 1st, it was our privilege to honor an individual who has preserved and enhanced the historic character of our community. **Kevin T. O'Brien** received the 2020 Historic Preservation award for his diligent restoration of the Moses Morse House at 311 Pelham Street. This once neglected and rundown property has been transformed under the auspices of Methuen's Historic Preservation Special Permit into a beautifully preserved historic home with a brand new house of complementary design to the original next door.

The Moses Morse House is a rare example of a Georgian 18th century farm house dating back to 1762. The house features a massive central chimney and a roughly symmetrical 2-1/2 story front. The chimney is slightly off-center indicating that the house may have been built in stages. The front door is sheltered by an elaborate and ornate Italian portico constructed in the 1870s. The house was listed on the prestigious National Register of Historic Places in 1984 for its historic merit including integrity of design, setting, materials and workmanship.

In 1762 when the Moses Morse House was constructed, Methuen was a rural community and farmers like Moses Morse sold their produce in the markets of Newburyport and Salem Massachusetts. Moses Morse was also one of many Methuen patriots who fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill in April 1775. In 1837 the Morse family sold the house to the Marsh family and soon the neighborhood around the home became known as Marsh Corner.

The award was presented by Katherine Robinson, Maureen Pollard, and Joe Bella. MCTV filmed the award and a Methuen Life reporter were also present. Kevin O'Brien spoke of the painstaking preservation effort and the cost to restore the special features of the property. He praised Methuen's Historic Preservation Special Permit and noted that without the incentive of the second house lot the Moses Morse House restoration could not have been profitable. The property will be placed under a preservation restriction which will preserve this treasure for generations to come. *Thank you, Kevin!* 🍀

Learn more About Methuen's Historic Preservation Special Permit on page 2.



More About Methuen’s Historic Preservation Special Permit (HPSP)

The costs of restoring a historic property can be prohibitive. The expense of recreating the finely crafted details of an older structure often leads to the decision to remove important details, box them in with siding, or worse, tear down the entire structure.

How does Methuen’s Special Permit help reduce the costs of restoration? It is a creative approach that provides financial incentive to developers to preserve buildings and build new ones. In a nutshell, the HPSP allows for zoning changes for a developer who restores a property to build another structure to help defray the costs of restoration. A list of very specific criteria must be met in order for an HPSP to be granted.

The main objectives of Historic Preservation Special Permits (HPSP) are:

- (1) To encourage preservation of buildings or structures of historical or architectural significance, in concert with the goals and policies of the Methuen Master Plan.
- (2) Encourage the restoration of existing historic buildings and structures in the community.
- (3) Establish eligibility criteria for buildings or structures of historical or architectural significance attaining protected status.
- (4) Expand economic options for the owner/investor, by broadening the permitted uses in various zoning districts and removing barriers presented by development standards governing those permitted uses.
- (5) Permit the flexibility of development options by modifying dimensional requirements that might be an impediment to historic preservation.
- (6) Preserve and enhance community character.



Learn more on the City of Methuen’s Special Permits page at:

<https://ecode360.com/36118963#36118963>

IN THE COMMUNITY

Congratulations and Best Wishes to Iverson Rodriguez!

Recipient of the Annual Methuen Historical Society’s Frank and Martha Welch Memorial Scholarship



Maureen Pollard (l) presents a \$500 scholarship to Iverson Rodriguez, with his proud mother Mercedes, at his side. The award was presented at the museum at a board meeting.

Each year the Methuen Historical Society awards a scholarship to a deserving student of the Greater Lawrence Regional Technical High School in appreciation for the assistance that school gave towards the restoration work of the Tenney Gatehouse. Completed in 1997, many vocational students from several trades contributed to the completion of this historic structure. In 2020 the Board of Directors voted to re-name this scholarship the Frank and Martha Welch Memorial Scholarship, in order to recognize the dedication and commitment of both of these long-time Historical Society board members.

This year the scholarship is awarded to Iverson Rodriguez, whose chosen trade at the Greater Lawrence Regional Technical High School was plumbing. His Co-operative experience was served at Meridian Fire Protection as an Apprentice Pipe fitter.

Ranked 10th in his class, Iverson achieved a 4.1 GPA. He was a class officer for all four years and still managed to participate in three years of cross country track, three years of tennis and one of basketball. Iverson was a Reggie Leader who was responsible

for contributing to such programs as Student Ambassador, where he helped mentor incoming freshmen, and working the school’s Parent Night. Iverson was chosen to participate in a mentoring program called Stand and Deliver in which Raytheon employees worked with the young students. In addition, Iverson has done his own mentoring as a summer youth worker for the Lawrence-Arlington District. This involved volunteering to help neighborhood children ages 6 through 13 with homework and a variety of activities. As a youth, Iverson participated in this summer program also and chose to “pay it forward” to the young people in his community coming after him.

His Guidance Counselor, Colleen Abdullah McGrath comments that Iverson has a positive outlook on all aspects of life and that he has enriched his high school community with his infectious school spirit, kind personality and extraordinary leadership skills.

Iverson was accepted into the University of Massachusetts Lowell and plans on majoring in engineering. We wish Iverson all the best in his college career and beyond.

Tenney Oil Portraits Restored Thanks to Methuen Cultural Council Grant



Methuen has benefited from the industry, generosity and vision of Methuen philanthropist and hat manufacturer, Charles H. Tenney and the Tenney family.



Last year, members of the Tenney family, (who are the great-grandchildren of C.H. Tenney) donated a number of historic artifacts including photos, letters, journals, wills, deeds and oil portraits. The portraits depict Charles Tenney (son of Daniel G. Tenney and grandson of C.H. Tenney who built Greycourt), who was the US District Court Judge for the Southern District of New York, appointed by President Kennedy, and former Deputy Mayor of the City of New York as well as a WWII Naval Reserve Lieutenant Commander, and his wife, Joan Lusk Tenney.



Thanks to a generous \$5,2000 grant from the Methuen Cultural Council, the MHS was able to afford the works of art a much-needed professional cleaning and restoration. The work was done by restorer Peter Williams whose studio is located in Boston's historic Fenway Studios building. Some of the paintings were also reframed where necessary.

Two additional portraits that had been donated to the Historical Society by Daniel Tenney III of Cambridge,

Massachusetts, were also restored. These two are of Daniel G. Tenney, son of C.H. Tenney (father of NYC Judge, Charles Tenney) who generously offered Greycourt and the entire Tenney estate to the town of Methuen in the 1950s. (*That's a story for another time.*)

After cleaning, colors and details that had been hidden by years of built up dirt, were revealed. One painting of Daniel Tenney was brought back to life. After being improperly stored in a non climate-controlled space, the painting had severely cracked and flaked. The restorer's artistic and technical skills successfully repaired the painting to its current amazing condition.

The beautiful oil portraits are by artists of note as well—Orland Campbell, Raymond R.R. Neilsen, and Louise Altson. The portraits will be hung as a collection at the museum with descriptive text about the subjects and the artists as well.

The MHS wishes to express our gratitude to the Methuen Cultural Council whose grant made the restoration possible and to the families of the Honorable Charles H. and Joan L. Tenney and Daniel Tenney III.

The portraits above, before restoration, are of (top to bottom) Charles as a young college student, Charles as a Lt. Commander, and Joan Lusk Tenney.



HONOR AND REMEMBER

Family of Methuen WWII Veteran, William E. Batty Located

Last year, the MHS received a request from the Netherlands for information regarding a WWII Methuen veteran, **William E. Batty**, who was killed in action in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium on New Year's Eve in 1944 at the age of 24.

Frans Reijnen, who made the request, is a volunteer sentinel, and a member of a Dutch non-profit group, the Fields of Honor Foundation. Frans and his fellow sentinels are dedicated people who care for the graves of US soldiers buried at the Henri-Chapelle American War Cemetery in Belgium. Frans said he serves as a sentinel to honor the sacrifice of men like William, who gave their lives fighting to liberate Europe from the horrors of Nazi occupation. Frans drives over 30 miles each way from the Netherlands to the cemetery to maintain William's gravesite. On what would have been William's 100th birthday, Frans and his wife placed flowers on William's grave to let him know he is not forgotten. He said that as the last of the surviving WWII veterans die off, he's afraid their stories will be lost forever.

Part of the Fields of Honor Foundation's mission is to add photos of those buried in the cemetery to their website. Frans had contacted us looking for William's family members and hopefully a photo of William as

well. After researching, MHS board member John Hadley was able to find only limited background information on William, but was not able to locate relatives or his photo. He placed an article in the *Methuen Life* newspaper but heard nothing. Then, two months later, a relative living in Boston contacted John with a photo of William and information about his life. The relative, who had never met his great uncle William, was moved to tears learning that a complete stranger remembers and honors this veteran's sacrifice. The relative contacted Frans who was so thankful to be able to speak to the Batty family. William's photo is now included as part of the Fields of Honor Foundation website: fieldsofhonor-database.com/index.php/en/american-war-cemetery-henri-chapelle-b/50273-batty-william-e

We are happy to have played a part in ensuring that William Batty's sacrifice will not be forgotten and that his photo will not be lost to time. Honor the vets in your lives by caring for their archives and recording their stories.

We'll be sharing the story of another brave Methuen WWII veteran killed in action. A donor recently generously donated his archives to the MHS. We are very grateful.



In photo: To commemorate what would have been William Batty's 100th birthday this September, Frans Reijnen respectfully placed flowers at the grave site.

New Exhibit Space Planned for Museum

Methuen has lots of stories to share about our past and our present. To create a space at the Methuen Museum of History where these stories can be shared, we're working to convert the former visitor center room into a space dedicated to new, changing exhibits and events that will help us share the many stories we know are worth telling. The rotating exhibits will engage and welcome new visitors and complement the existing displays as well.

The Methuen Museum belongs to our entire community and exhibits should reflect the beauty and rich diversity of our city. History is not static, it is not only made by old men. History is continual and everchanging. We are all part of the history of Methuen. The topics we will explore will be varied and relevant to today—and to tomorrow.

Let Us Know What You Think

Do you have an idea or a topic you think we should research for an upcoming exhibit? Some of the topics we are currently reviewing for future exhibits include Methuen's farming history, Methuen's diverse ethnic communities and their cultural contributions to our city, Methuen's Native American cultures, Methuen's civic and professional organizations, recent additions to the Tenney collection, Methuen's veterans, art and architecture in Methuen, Methuen natural history and changing landscapes, to name just a few.

We welcome your ideas! Please send your thoughts to info@methuenhistoricalsociety.org

History belongs to all of us.

concept sketches



Let's make history—together!

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY

MethuenHistoricalSociety.org

“Take a stand for what’s right. Raise a ruckus and make a change. You may not always be popular, but you’ll be part of something larger and bigger and greater than yourself. Besides, **making history is extremely cool.**”

—Samuel L. Jackson

Meeting House Hill Cemetery Gates Opened

On Saturday, October 9, The Methuen Historical Society arranged to open the gates to the public and welcomed visitors to our historic Meeting House Hill cemetery. Over thirty people showed up for a self-guided tour, viewed informative displays on Methuen's American Revolution-era houses and the patriots buried here, and posed questions to our cemetery experts. The cemetery, located across the street from Holy Family/Steward Hospital, is normally locked so this was an opportunity not to be missed. The burying ground with its mature white pine trees, stone walls and Searles' family granite mausoleum, and is filled with intriguing 18th and 19th century gravestones of our town's founders and early inhabitants. The grave stones, some of the oldest in Methuen, were hand carved by the likes of Benjamin Day and Robert Mullicken.

The work of cleaning, stabilizing and restoring the headstones was completed by Epoch Preservation and a team of dedicated Methuen Historical Society volunteers under the guidance of board member Bev Brown. The project was funded by a generous grant from the Methuen Festival of Trees.

Check out the map and epitaph links on our website!



At right, detail of stone carving on 18th-century headstone at Meeting House Hill cemetery.



Tower Window Restoration Is Underway

If you've passed by the Methuen Museum of History at the Tenney Gatehouse recently, you may have noticed plywood panels covering the windows of the tower. Don't panic—they haven't fallen out nor have they been vandalized. Thanks to a grant from the Methuen Festival of Trees for up to \$10,000, The windows have been temporarily removed by Ken Paulson of Paulson Stained Glass Studio in Upton, Massachusetts, who has been diligently working to restore the six leaded Queen Anne colored windows and two clear glass lower sashes.

Time has taken its toll on the windows which are exposed to interior/exterior temperature extremes, sunlight, and weather. The extremes in temperature have caused some of the windows to warp and the glazing needs a refresh. Multiple coats of paint are being removed from the muntins (the wooden strips separating panes of glass in a sash) and window frames. New border leads and fresh glazing compound will be added around the leaded glass sections and the wood sashes will be cleaned, primed, and painted. Broken and missing hardware will be replaced too.

We are grateful to Ken for his skills in window restoration and to the Festival of Trees for the generous grant that has made this possible. Soon the plywood panels will be gone and the colored glass panes will shine again. At night, we light the interior of the tower so the emerald green, cobalt blue, cadmium red, pale violet, and deep orange colored glass panes may be enjoyed by passersby.

The Mystery of the Lost Lion's Head

In 1985, the ruins of Greycourt, Tenney's majestic castle, were demolished by a wrecking ball. The beautiful hand-cast architectural terracotta decorative elements that had survived the 1975 fire and the elements, were smashed into pieces and discarded in a landfill. Fortunately, some items survived and were 'rescued' from being buried in a landfill.

One of the artifacts, the lion's head shown at the right, had crowned the sections above the windows on the castle facade and interior courtyard. John Hadley took this photo in the 1990s of the lion's head, which had been stored in our town yard. The lion's head, which measured approximately 2 1/2 feet tall, has since disappeared. If you know where it is located, please contact the MHS. John only wants to measure it and take photos and possibly make a mold for a future project. No questions asked. Thanks!



Our Raffle Winner!



Ted Fairburn of Methuen accepts the winning raffle prize of one hundred \$10 Massachusetts State Lottery scratch tickets from MHS president, Maureen Pollard. Ted had a 1-in-500 chance of winning. We hope all that scratching paid off! See the Letter from Our President on page 1 for more details.



Railroad Square (5 Corners), 1904 postcard.

Thanks for support!

We value the continued support of our members. Your financial support helps the society meet the goals of our mission. Renew your membership online! Please invite others to join as well.

Volunteers needed

- Founding Family Project
- Cemetery Project
- Gardening and landscaping
- Museum tour guide

Funds needed for

- Cemetery restoration
- Chimney pot replications
- Landscaping project
- Archiving materials

Fall Museum Hours

Masks are required for all visitors.

Saturdays, 12:00 - 2:00 pm

Hours are posted online as well. For an appointment, please email us with your request.

Visit our website

methuenhistoricalsociety.org

Methuen Historical Society

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Let's make history—together!

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY
MethuenHistoricalSociety.org



Join Us for Our Annual Meeting

This year's Annual Meeting will be held virtually via Zoom due to the current pandemic. We'll be presenting our Preservation Award, given annually to individuals for their contributions to historic preservation in Methuen.

Day, DATE
7:00 p.m.



How can I attend the Annual Meeting?

If you'd like to attend, please email us at info@methuenhistoricalsociety.org and we'll email you a link to attend virtually via Zoom. We hope you can join us!

