



# FRIENDS OF METHUEN HISTORY

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



A Note from  
Our President,  
Maureen Pollard



## Meeting the Challenges of A Pandemic

GREETINGS FROM THE METHUEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY! We hope you are all well and surviving the trials and tribulations of the last six months. Covid-19 has impacted all of us and we want you to know that we care very much about the health and safety our members and friends. During the past six months our Society has experienced “virtual board meetings,” a “socially distant” Fourth of July Celebration, and our Museum closure. Raising funds for our various projects has been a major concern and continues to be a top priority. However, despite the distractions, we have managed to continue work on our Meeting House Hill Cemetery grave restoration project, fund our Annual Vocational School Scholarship, clean and organize the Gatehouse, and begin an archiving project for our historic documents. Our annual fundraiser, which occurred in July, rather than the spring, was a success and helped us obtain much needed funds for the upkeep of our Museum.

As of September 12, the Museum has reopened and we are excited once again to welcome the public to this special place. For now the Museum will be open every other Wednesday and Saturday. For a specific hours and days, please visit the Museum Schedule on our website: [methuenhistoricalsociety.org](http://methuenhistoricalsociety.org) Please remember that our continued success depends on the generosity of our members and friends. While you are visiting our website, we would urge you to click onto our “membership tab” and renew your membership in the Methuen Historical Society. Your financial support helps us fund operations of the Methuen Museum of History and various preservation initiatives in Methuen.

Finally, it is with great sadness that we mourn the passing of our long time Board Member and past President Martha Welch. Not only was Martha active in our Methuen Historical Society, but she was also a member and past President of the Tenney Preservation Committee, a founding Board member of Methuen Festival of Trees, and the long time organizer for the Victorian Outing. Our Board voted that our Annual Scholarship to a Vocational School student will be re-named the *Frank and Martha Welch Annual Scholarship* in Martha and Frank's memory. Martha will be sadly missed by this community. (See more on page 2)

## Tenney Family Donates Archival Materials to Historical Society

Tenney Family tradition  
of philanthropy enriches  
Methuen once again



For over 150 years, Methuen has benefited from the industry, generosity and vision of Methuen philanthropist and hat manufacturer, Charles H. Tenney and the Tenney family. Keeping with the Tenney family tradition of philanthropy that has enriched Methuen's cultural patrimony, the Methuen Historical Society has received a historically significant collection of Tenney family archival materials. In May, we received an email from Toby Unger, husband of the late Anne Gleason Tenney (great granddaughter of Charles H. Tenney and daughter of the Honorable Charles Henry Tenney, 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).

In his initial email, Mr. Unger wrote, “I have in my possession several boxes of artifacts, papers, diaries, pictures, and oil portraits of Judge Tenney, his wife Joan Lusk Tenney, a portrait of Charles Henry Tenney as a young man, that the family would be honored to donate to the Tenney Museum so future generations will appreciate the rich history and valuable contributions to society the Tenney's have made.” The Methuen Historical Society is thrilled and deeply appreciative of the Tenney family's donation and is committed to safeguarding these archives and to make them accessible to all who are interested.

Archival materials and artifacts spanning three centuries include land deeds, family photos, exterior photos of Greycourt under construction and newly-built, personal handwritten letters by C.H. Tenney and Edward Searles, financial documents, land deeds, Tenney family letters, 18th-century genealogical records of the Gleason family (Mrs. CH Tenney), a fascinating detailed record of the entire contents of Greycourt,

records of Methuen's rejection of the Tenney Castle offered to Methuen by Daniel Gleason Tenney, C.H. Tenney's letters to his son Daniel from his Grand Tour through Europe and Egypt, 19th century political posters, and so much more! Also included are three oil portraits of Judge Tenney as a young man and as a WWII Naval Reserve Lieutenant Commander, and his wife, Joan Lusk Tenney. The portraits are by artists of note as well—Orland Campbell, Raymond R.R. Neilsen, and Louise Altson. The MHS is applying for a grant to have these three portraits and one of Daniel Gleason Tenney professionally cleaned and restored. The family has asked that the donated items be part of the collection donated by ‘The Family of Honorable Charles H. and Joan L. Tenney.’

The task of organizing, cataloging scanning, photographing, cleaning, and preparing archival storage of these artifacts is an ongoing process. The MHS has just recently investigated software to make these artifacts, as well as others in the collection, digital and accessible to all who may have an interest in historical research.

More information will be shared as we proceed to catalog and create a digital archive.

### Tenney History of Giving

Daniel Gleason Tenney, son of C.H. Tenney, was in the process of donating the Tenney estate to the town of Methuen when he died unexpectedly in 1951. The generous gift included Grey Court Castle (designed by the famed architectural firm of Carrere & Hastings) and the surrounding 80-acre award-winning landscaped property. Unbelievably, the town government subsequently rejected the gift. This decision set in motion a series of events that, over the next three decades, would lead to the destruction of the castle.



## Memorial Tree Honors Architect and Friend, Martha Briggs

On Memorial Day weekend 2019 the Tenney Gatehouse garden received a new addition: a Green Vase Zelkova tree donated in memory of Martha Ough Briggs, one of the three volunteer architects who donated their services to restore the Gatehouse. Martha was involved throughout the years-long Gatehouse restoration process but came to the front on the interior design and finishes. Her specialized training in historic preservation, her infectious enthusiasm and humor, and her generous hard work are embodied in the restored Gatehouse we know today.

The Green Vase Zelkova tree is native to Japan, Taiwan and eastern China. It is noted for its graceful shape, clean foliage, attractive bark and resistance to Dutch elm disease. The tree is often chosen as a replacement for the American Elm, as it is hearty, grows well in urban environments, and is resistant to Dutch Elm disease. The tree is expected to grow quickly and will eventually provide a canopy with limbs spreading well above the Gatehouse roof line and softening the scale of the neighboring Searles Building side wall without obscuring the Gatehouse's unique architectural detailing.

Last October, Martha's husband Robert, daughter Victoria, son Xavier, Martha's mother-in-law, and a small group of Historical Society members dedicated the tree, shared memories and celebrated their connection to this place that was special to Martha's heart. The tree and memorial marker were donated and planted by board members Katherine Robinson, Joe Bella and John Hadley.



Tenney Gatehouse: interior designer Martha Briggs and John Hadley, both of Methuen, measure rooms at the Tenney Gatehouse in Methuen. A group of volunteers worked on the building's inside this weekend.

### IN THE COMMUNITY

## Congratulations, Simon Morrisey, Recipient of Annual Methuen Historical Society Scholarship

Simon Morrisey, son of Amanda and Ryan Morrisey of Methuen, is a top student in Greater Lawrence Technical School's HVAC Program. Simon has consistently challenged himself by taking the most rigorous academic program available at GLTS, including two dual enrollment college courses and A.P. Physics where he has earned an A+ thus far for the year. Simon has a 4.43 GPA and is ranked 2nd in a class of 373. In addition to outstanding academic and vocational performance, Simon has also been employed by Central Cooling & Heating through the school's Cooperative Education Program for his junior and senior years, demonstrating a strong commitment and work ethic. He has also worked for Control Point Mechanical as a Panel Assembler. In addition, Simon was named a Boston University Book Award Recipient in his Junior Year, and a John and Abigail Adams Scholarship recipient for high MCAS scores with



a perfect MCAS Math score of 280. Additionally, Simon has served as a Reggie Leader for younger students, a SkillsUSA participant, and has been very involved in his church community where he volunteers regularly.

Those who know Simon will agree that he is a humble, intelligent, and determined young man who has worked hard to get to where he is now. Due to Simon's outstanding skills and ambitions, he has several post-high school options that he is considering—a career in the HVAC field, college, as well as continuing to work through his church.

As a point of interest, Simon's parents, Amanda and Ryan Morrisey, received a 2005 Preservation Award from Methuen Historical Society for their house on Lowell Street. Congratulations, Simon, and best wishes in your future endeavors.

## Martha and Frank Welch Memorial Scholarship Honors Contributions

On a sad note, Methuen recently lost a historic lion. We were all saddened to learn



of the death of Martha M. Welch, a former President of our organization. Although Martha was a native of Lowell, she contributed greatly to her adopted home, Methuen. Martha was a founder of both the Tenney Preservation Association, which was created as an advocacy organization to save the former Tenney Estate from development, and the

Methuen Historical Society. She was also the creator of the long running Victorian Outing in Methuen.

In recognition of the enormous contribution of Martha and her husband Frank, longtime Society Treasurer, to the preservation of the history of Methuen, the Historical Society Board voted to name the scholarship given to a student graduating from the Greater Lawrence Technical High School, "The Martha and Frank Welch Memorial Scholarship." The scholarship will be given annually to a student graduating from one of the trades that contributed to the restoration of the Tenney Gatehouse.

Martha's energy, enthusiasm, commitment and leadership will be missed by us all.

Martha's online obituary: [obituaries.eagletribune.com/obituary/martha-welch-1079730964](http://obituaries.eagletribune.com/obituary/martha-welch-1079730964)

## Founding Families of Methuen Project

In January 2019, The Education and Research Committee of the Historical Society began a project to identify the remaining 16th and 17th century homes still standing in our community. In identifying these homes, we discovered that some of them were built by, or were lived in, by Revolutionary War soldiers and Minutemen who responded to the alarm at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. Out of that project, and our curiosity of where these Patriots might be buried, we began the mapping, cleaning and restoration of the gravestones at the Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery, the first cemetery in Methuen.

As the Education and Research Committee researched and prepared the history of our colonial homes, we became curious about who the ancestors were of these founding families. The committee has been working for months researching the history, origins, and genealogy of these families. In the process, we have learned a great deal about the founding of America, the Merrimack Valley, Methuen, and Haverhill the community we were formed from. We have researched deeds first identified in our colonial homes project to get a sense of land ownership and original settlement.

Our research began with the question, what constitutes a founding family? Our project builds off the list of people mentioned in

the early town meeting records of Methuen from 1726 to 1736 when a list was put in the town meeting records of every person taxed in Methuen. Working off this list of people, we went backwards to determine their ancestry to the person who first arrived in America. That research took us to Newbury, Ipswich, Rowley, Haverhill, and Andover mostly—these being the communities that our founders migrated from. We are researching all names in the early records, but we are beginning with those people most prominently mentioned in the early history of Methuen. The research effort will follow each generation (including female lines) beginning with the immigrant ancestor and will end when a descendant leaves Methuen and settles elsewhere. For many of these families, we are writing the history of hundreds of people per. In the coming months, the research team will be preparing and publishing the first in a series of booklets beginning with the Swan, Whittier, Frye, Ayer, Eaton, Emerson, Currier, Carlton and Bodwell families.

Our research team met in-person, pre-Covid, but since March we are “Zooming” our meetings. If you love history and research, please consider joining our group. We learn something new every time we get together and have fun doing it. For information please contact us at [info@methuenhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@methuenhistoricalsociety.org).

## New Fourth of July Tradition in Methuen



On a bright and sunny Fourth of July morning, over 100 citizens of Methuen gathered to read the Declaration of Independence on Meetinghouse Hill to celebrate our nation's 244th birthday. The Methuen Historical Society, who organized the event, has plans to make this an annual event. Nineteen citizens, including Senator Diana DiZoglio

volunteered to read a portion of the Declaration. The volunteers also included two young people, Theodore and Henry Higginbottom of Methuen.

In her opening remarks, Historical Society Maureen Pollard, spoke about the town meeting record's mention of preparations taking place “for whatever was coming”. She also mentioned that the town's records say that on July 17, 1776, it was ordered by John Hancock that the Declaration be printed, and a copy sent to the minister of each parish of the state. They were instructed to read the Declaration to their respective congregations at the conclusion of their service. To respect this history, Pastor William Ingraham the current Pastor of the First Church Congregational, read the first section of the Declaration just as Rev. Christopher Sargent would have in 1776.

At the conclusion of the reading, people were invited to tour the Meetinghouse Hill Cemetery, the city's oldest, to view the on-going restoration work being carried out by the Historical Society and many volunteers. *See you next Fourth of July!*

## Work at Meeting House Hill Cemetery Continues

Board Member Bev Brown and her team of dedicated volunteers document cemetery



Detail of stone carving on 18th-century headstone at Meeting House Hill cemetery.

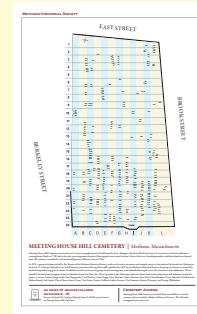
Work at Methuen's oldest cemetery continues as headstones are stabilized and preserved thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the Festival of Trees, Inc. Epoch Preservation, of Ipswich, Massachusetts, has been contracted to repair 40 headstones that have deteriorated over time. Depending on the condition of each stone, stones will be professionally reset, capped (sealing the top to prevent water damage), and/or reassembled. The repair work is scheduled to be completed by the arrival of cold temperatures.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of board member Bev Brown and her team of volunteers, the cemetery received the long-overdue care it desperately needed, including surface cleaning of headstones. Bev and her team carefully recorded and mapped the cemetery. On the Fourth of July, the Society organized what we hope will be an annual tradition in Methuen, a public reading of the Declaration of Independence. Visitors who attended the event enjoyed the opportunity to explore the historic cemetery.



For more information and photos, check out our website events page at [methuenhistoricalsociety.org/events](http://methuenhistoricalsociety.org/events).

**See page 5 for an upcoming event at the cemetery!**



Based on detailed information gathered by Bev and her team, John Hadley created a searchable map, available on our website.

## Society Salutes Our Past President, Denis Webster Greene



We will always be grateful to Denis Webster Greene for the leadership he offered the Methuen Historical Society as our president. Denis led our organization for seven years and served at a time of expansion for the Society. Denis loves history—he understands and appreciates how respecting history is an important foundation for any community.

Denis was an important part of the creation of the Methuen Museum of History. He was instrumental in securing funding for the Museum and presided over the creative process, including the design and placement of each exhibit. He always supported Methuen having a Museum to showcase the heritage and beauty of our community.

In addition to his contribution to the Society, Denis serves as the vice chair of the Methuen Historic District Commission and chair of the Methuen Preservation Committee.

While enjoying his retirement, Denis will divide his time between Methuen and Florida with his husband, Paul. Denis continues his support of the mission of the Methuen Historical Society and the Methuen Museum of History. We will miss Denis' strong hand and guidance as we move forward but we'll be forever grateful for his leadership.

**Thank you, Denis!**

## Recreating Our Missing Chimney Pots



Original chimney pot



Existing chimney pot



Proposed chimney pot.  
(Drawing by John Hadley)

“One of the most characteristic and beautiful features in rural Gothic architecture is the ornamental chimney shaft, sometimes rising singly, sometimes in clusters from the roof—but frequently wreathed and molded in the most picturesque manner.”

Andrew Jackson Downing,  
*In Cottage Residences* (1842)

The museum features lovely decorative and once functional terracotta chimney pots that crown the brick chimney stacks. Unfortunately, two of them have been missing for decades. Hopefully, that will soon change. During the restoration of the Tenney Gatehouse, one of the two original terracotta chimney pots was found in pieces on the roof, hidden behind the brick chimney stack. The pieces were carefully removed yet, over the years, have gone missing. Fortunately, the original pot was photographed and it is from these photos that artist and board member John Hadley is recreating replica chimney pots that will one day adorn the front chimney where they originally stood.

North American chimney pots clearly seem to be European in origin. Most are made of terra-cotta and iron and were used from England to Italy where hearths for coal or other slow-burning fires were common. The use of chimney pots in the United States was popularized in the 19th century by **Andrew Jackson Downing**, father of American landscape architecture. Downing's passion for Gothic Revival architecture and chimney pots led to their widespread use. Windows and chimney tops Downing wrote, “are two of the most essential and characteristic features of dwelling houses...to which decoration should always be first applied rather than to any less essential or superadded features.” Chimney pots, he notes, “should always be rendered ornamental, both because strongly expressive of comfort, no house being tolerable in a cold climate without fires, and on account of their occupying the highest part of the building,

and therefore being most likely to strike the eye agreeably.”

Chimney pots are not only decorative but functional. Chimney pots improve draft by extending the chimney height. In the latter half of the 19th century as Gothic Revival architecture waned, chimney pots remained functional for the increasing use of coal in heating, where their tapered forms improved flue draft.

In the early 20th century, with the resurgent influence of English architecture and picturesque houses, some Arts & Crafts houses built on the East Coast made use of them. In the 1920s, with various interpretations of Tudor and English Revival architecture in suburban houses, chimney pots once again came into use.

Using the photo of the original chimney pots as reference, John Hadley is in the process of sculpting a replica using modeling clay, plaster, and wood. Once the replica of the octagonal pot has been completed, he will make a mold and have the two pots cast in concrete, or if the society can afford to, cast the replicas in terracotta. The goal is to have them installed by next year. John says that the replacement of the chimney pots will be the “icing on the cake”. The process of creating a replica requires lots of time and materials. We look forward to the day that this important architectural detail is finally restored.

Source and more information available at:  
[oldhouseonline.com/gardens-and-exterior/history-of-chimney-pots](http://oldhouseonline.com/gardens-and-exterior/history-of-chimney-pots)

## Join Us! Open Cemetery Gates

**Methuen Meeting House Hill Cemetery**  
**Sunday, November 8 | 10:30 am - 2:00 pm**

The Methuen Historical Society will be opening the gates. Come see the newly repaired stones at the usually locked Meeting House Hill Cemetery. A beautiful pine tree burying ground surrounded by Edward Searles architecture and filled with the gravestones of town founders, carved by the likes of Benjamin Day and Robert Mullicken.

Please wear a mask and social distance when visiting the cemetery. The current limit for gatherings outdoors is 50 people so be mindful of this if it seems too busy to safely distance during your visit.



Photo: Epoch Preservation, Facebook page

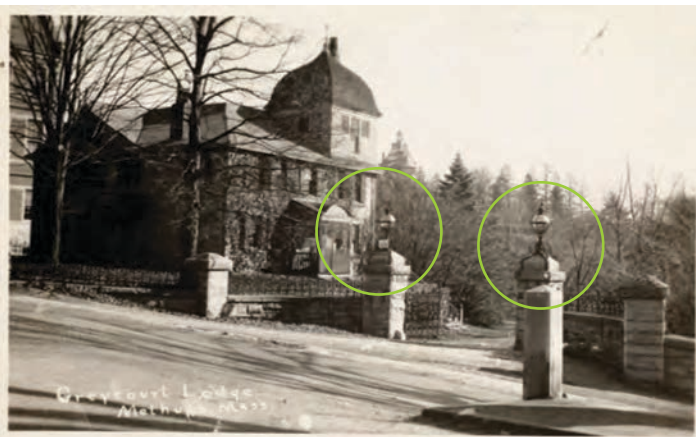
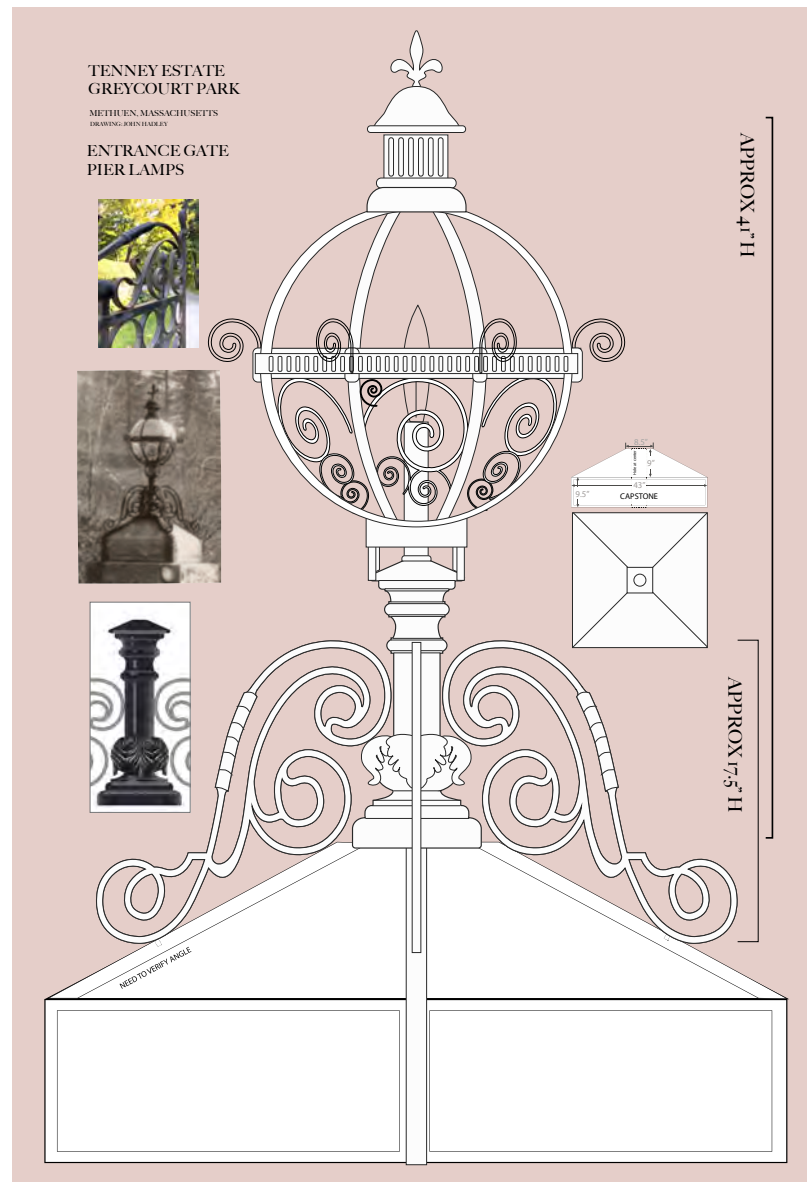
## Lighting the Way to the Past

Historic replication of two wrought iron lanterns that sat atop the entrance gate stone piers is in the planning stages

Atop the two granite piers that flank the entrance gates to the once majestic Greycourt Estate, sat two imposing wrought iron gas lanterns. No one knows when or why the original lanterns and original pyramid granite stone caps were removed. If additional funding can be found, board member Joe Bella has generously offered to donate a large portion of the cost of replicating and replacing the lanterns.

After carefully measuring the existing piers and studying photographic references, board member John Hadley created working drawings and a 3D model that can be used to recreate the replicas lanterns. John and Joe visited the Cassidy Brothers Foundry in Rowley, Massachusetts (coincidentally once home to the Tenney settlers) to see samples of the beautiful work they do and to learn more about the process of creating the historically accurate lanterns. The work is estimated to cost \$20,000, which does not include cutting the existing caps to the original size. The new lanterns would be solar powered since the expense to run gas or electrical lines to the piers would be too costly.

This process underscores the high cost of hand forged ironwork and the importance of preservation. If the original lanterns had been preserved, the task and expense of creating replicas could have been avoided.





## Searching for Information on Methuen WWII Veteran, William E. Batty

The MHS often receives requests from people looking for help with genealogical research. We recently received a touching email from Frans Reijnen, a citizen of the Netherlands, looking for information on former Methuen resident and Purple Heart recipient, William E. Batty, who was killed in Belgium on New Year's Eve in 1944 at the age of 24. (His sister Mildred graduated from Searles High School in 1945.) Mr. Reijnen is a volunteer sentinel at the American War Cemetery Henri-Chappelle in Belgium. We are grateful to Frans for his dedication to preserving the memory of a US soldier killed in battle.

Board member John Hadley was able to locate some information on William Batty, including his military registration card, address in Methuen, and details of his family from a 1930 census. Frans would like to locate a photo of William Batty and any of his relatives.

If you have any information, please contact the MHS at [info@methuenhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@methuenhistoricalsociety.org).

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



## 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
- Restoration of the Tenney portraits
- Landscaping project
- Archiving materials

### Visit our website

Watch for updates on our website.

### Museum Hours: November & December

*Masks are required for all visitors.*

Wed., November 4 and 18 | 12:00 - 2:00 pm  
 Sat., November 14 and 28 | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm  
 Wed., December 2, 16 & 30 | 12:00 - 2:00 pm  
 Sat., December 12 | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

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

**Methuen Historical Society | P.O. Box 52, Methuen, MA 01844**  
**[info@methuenhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@methuenhistoricalsociety.org) | Tel: 978-683-2252**



## 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.

**Tuesday, November 10**  
**7:00 p.m.**



### How can I attend the Annual Meeting?

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

