



Braintree Historical Society, Inc.

News-Letter

31 Tenney Road, Braintree MA 02184 – www.braintreehistorical.org – 781-848-1640

December, 2023

A Message from the President:



Dear Members and Friends,
Best wishes to all for a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year from the Braintree Historical Society Board of Directors!

This year, and every year, the Board of Directors is grateful for the opportunity and privilege to be the custodian of some of Braintree’s most historic properties and artifacts. 2023 has been a year full of both successes and challenges for the Society in exercising that opportunity and privilege.

In 2023, we have enjoyed hosting both school student tours and public tours of the General Sylvanus Thayer House, Heritage Day events, the Thayer Family Reunion, the Holiday Bazaar and many individual visitors to the Society’s campus. Many individuals have visited us regarding our house plaque program and for various types of historical research.

We have also enjoyed great community support through volunteer work, donations of historic items and financial contributions. We also have been fortunate to receive great support from the Town of Braintree.

Our challenges have included many unplanned expenses. Major issues and expensive costs have surfaced regarding the heating systems for both the Thayer House and the Barn/Resource Center. Though not in the “major” category, the heating system for the Gallivan House has also required a significant unplanned expense. This year also saw numerous unplanned expenses in other areas.

The Society is in the process of conducting structural reviews of all four of the Society buildings. Reviews of both the French House and

the Thayer House have been completed. Both of those houses seem to be in relatively good structural condition (for houses that are each over 300 years old). However, both buildings need numerous types of maintenance work.

The cost for the 2024 maintenance needed for those two buildings (including trim painting/prep work for the Thayer House and gutter work for the French House) will be high. Our total operational and maintenance costs (including major elevator costs for the Resource Center) will total well over \$100,000 for 2024.

Old buildings require lots of maintenance and money. Unfortunately, the Society’s financial resources are not sufficient to pay for all the work that needs to be done. The Society is in the process of seeking grants for some of our expenses, but the grant opportunities are limited. The Society needs financial support. Please consider donating whatever amount you can afford to donate to the Braintree Historical Society. Our mailing address is 31 Tenney Road, Braintree, MA 02184.

Thank you and best wishes for 2024.

Steve Leonard

In this issue:

Presidents Letter	1
Introducing Some of Our Volunteers	2
Knights Special Donation	3
Bazaar Great Success	3
Curator’s Corner	3
Donations Since Last News-Letter	3
Welcome New Members	4
Support Our Business Members	

Contact the News-Letter Editor, Ron Frazier with any Braintree information that would be of interest, at ronfrazier@hotmail.com

Introducing Some of Our Volunteers:

In the last issue we highlighted the elected Board of Directors. In this issue we highlight a few of our wonderful, dedicated volunteers. While some have a history with Braintree that goes back generations, others are newer to the town. But since the Society is an All Volunteer organization we are always looking for new people with any kind of a background to help us. We need help with all phases of our operations, including physical strength to undertake tasks necessary for maintaining our four properties. So give us a call and see how you can help preserve Braintree's history and tell our wonderful, historic story. Here are a few who do just that.



Claudia Shutter is a retired librarian of 39 years. Her professional experience was in cataloging and organization. "I met Ruth Powell through the Simmons College Alumni Assn. when I was President. She told me when you retire, I know a place that could use you." So in 2015 I answered her call. Through her relationship with the Thayer Public Library she has enabled the Braintree High School yearbooks and the Braintree Town Reports to be digitized by the Boston Public Library Digital Imaging Lab "There's so much unique information at BHS, it's my hope to make it digitally accessible for preservation and for those interested in our country's history."



Mary Small Frazier has been our Curator for more than ten years, but actually served as the Society's Curator of Costumes and Textiles as far back as the 1970s. She is a graduate of Merrimack College with additional studies at Northeastern and Boston University starting off her career as a research biochemist, ultimately graduating from Clark University's IT program, spending her later years in the IT world. Mary catalogued the costumes and fans of a number of Massachusetts historical societies, and installed

many museum exhibits. In addition to her other work, she is certified and has taught genealogy courses for historical societies, high schools and colleges. She has done research in many countries. She authored two books on Braintree's Hunt and Allen Fan factories, as well as magazine articles.



Ruth Powell was born in 1926 in Whitman, educated in local schools. She has a BS in chemistry from Simmons College. And worked as chemist, lab assistant, medical researcher, and librarian while moving around. Lived in Cambridge, Edmonton (Alberta), Buffalo, New York City, Edinburgh (Scotland) and Quincy before settling in Braintree in 1959. Interested in smocking, quilting, travel, fine dining, singing, poetry, history, and genealogy. Ruth has been volunteering continually since the 1970s.



John H. Donovan manages the Braintree Historical Society's House Plaque Program. He is a retired environmental engineer. John and his wife Carol have lived in Braintree for more than 40 years. John has inventoried and catalogued more than 600 of the Society's collection of maps.



Gail Columbare has been volunteering at the Historical Society for five years, working with the curator. She, along with Mary and Ruth has been organizing and doing an inventory of the General Sylvanus Thayer house and Braintree's historical collections. She also manages the Society's display at the Thayer Public Library, using items to highlight the Society's collections, which change quarterly. Gail has been a resident of Braintree for 35 years, and was a librarian for the Thomas Crane Public Library for 33 years.

Special Need Acknowledged with Doubled Donation



Society President Steve Leonard receives a second \$2,000 check from Ron Frazier, a Director of the Knights 1462 Foundation, a charitable arm of the Braintree Council 1462 Knights of Columbus. This brought to \$4,000 that the Foundation has given to the Society this year. Frazier said that the Foundation was aware of the dire needs of the Society and made this extraordinary, second gift, in light of those needs.

Bazaar a Great Success



In an effort to raise some badly needed funds, Sunny Shaw pulled together enough great items to run a bazaar in the Society's Gilbert L. Bean barn. Shown here are a few of the volunteers who worked on two weekends to get the job done. Shown are Alan Flowers, Gail Saccone, Pepi Goodhue, Mary Frazier, Sunny Shaw, and Adrienne Whitehouse.

Curator's Corner

While we haven't been reporting the many new acquisitions since before the pandemic, we will be getting caught up. Curator Mary Frazier reports the following donations:

WWII Ration Books 1942. Gift of the Sturtevant Family

WWII Cartridge Belt 1943. Gift of Frank J. Cole
Thomas A. Watson's Blotter early 1900s. Gift from his daughter.

Fly Paper 1930s. Ruth Powell

5 gal. Milk Cannister late 1800s. Gift of Susan M. Lee

Swim Tag from Sunset Lake 1950s. Unk

Clef Line Maker 1940s. Gift of Gail Columbare

Ruby Glass 1930-50s. Gift of the Pantano Family
Puttees WWI. Gift of Ruth Powell, they were her father's

Braintree High Rifle Club Jacket 1988. Gift of Frank Collins

Braintree Fire Department Uniforms 1966-2003. Gift of James P. Smith

Hand Puppet 1940s. Gift of Gail Columbare

Boy Scouts of America Handbook 1926. Gift of Frank Haffner

Wedding Dress 1970. Gift of Claudette Newhall made by her mother Calibri (Body)

Texas Instrument Calculator late 20th. Gift of Ruth Powell

Cloth Diaper 1900s. Gift of Ruth Powell

Men's Panama Hat 1980s. Gift of Beverly Bourne

We have probably hundreds of additional items to follow in future News-Letters.

Donations that have Come in Since Our Last News-Letter

Garret Moran and Mary Penniman Family Foundation

David Parr Ruth Powell

Thayer Family Association

David Parr for the Acquisitions Fund

Leo J. Hart Susan Lee

Thomas Kent Dick Fletcher

Sandra and Jeffrey Kunz Dan Richardi

David Parr Gail Burns

Alan and Barbara Flowers for a matching grant

Welcome New Members

Jennifer Pelose Jan Seibert
Shannon and Michael Pelose
Eric and Reeny Savage Ginny Tobin
Sandra and Jeffrey Kunz

Our Latest Exhibit at the BPL

As noted in this News-Letter, Gail Columbare installs the exhibits for the Society that are on display in the Thayer Public Library. The latest is titled *Small Things*. Shown here are a few of them.



Braintree Historical Society Board of Directors

President: Stephen P. Leonard, Vice President: Sonya Shaw, Treasurer: Thomas M. Kent, Sr. Corresponding Secretary: Alan Flowers. Clerk: Pepe Goodhue. Director to 2024: Adrienne Whitehouse. Directors to 2025: Christopher Griffin, Wesley Painter. Director to 2026: Gail Saccone, Derek Manning. Immediate Past President: Robert Harris

SUPPORT THE BUSINESSES WHO SUPPORT THE SOCIETY

Our Business Members are those businesses in the community who have demonstrated their support of the Historical Society. As such we should patronize them when we can and let them know we appreciate their support for the Society.

\$2,500 and above FOUNDATION LEVEL

Quirk Auto Dealerships
The Braintree Knights of Columbus and the
Braintree Knights 1462 Foundation

\$1,500 and above PARTNERSHIP

\$500 PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE

Adams Street Enterprise LLC
Blue Hills Cemetery
Frye Agency
Braintree AARP

\$250 EXECUTIVE MEMBER

Tufankjian Auto Group
Williams Energy
Penniman Family Foundation
Grillo Oriental Rugs

\$100 CORPORATE MEMBER

Braintree Chiropractic
Braintree Rug Company
Braintree Rifle and Pistol Club
Herbst Law Group LLC
Glow Beauty Boutique
King Optical Company
Century 21 Marella Realty
Crossroads Pub
Lane, Lane and Kelly, LLP
Portland Pottery South

Please remember the Historical Society in your end-of-year giving. We are a 501(c)3 charitable educational organization.

BRAINTREE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

31 Tenney Road

Braintree, MA 02184

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED..