

# Sutton Historical Society Bulletin



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Kate Hutchinson, Senior Editor

Malcolm Pearson, Editor Emeritus

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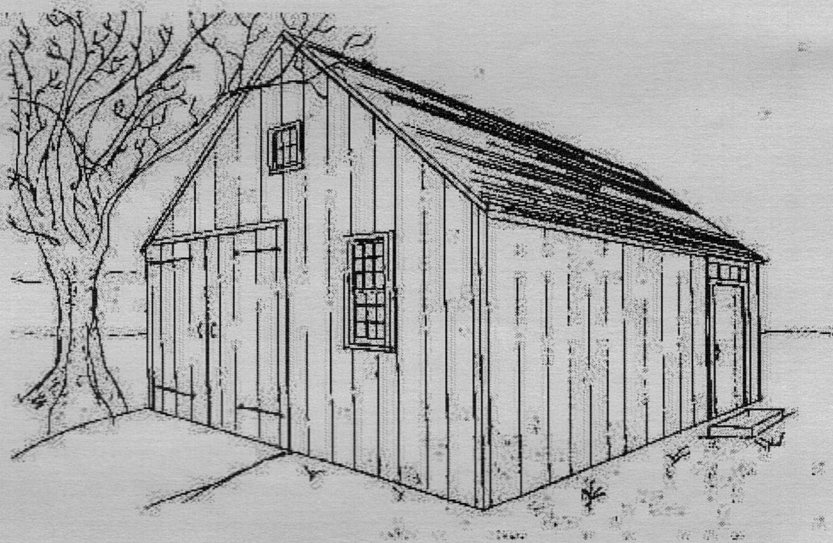
*Director’s Profile:  
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## A Home At Last For “Old Ben”

*An update on the construction of the cannon shed.*

*By Kate Hutchinson*

In early July, construction began on a shed to house Sutton's historic 1862 Napoleon cannon, “Old Ben,” behind the Sherman Blacksmith Shop on Singletary Ave. The construction crew, headed by Steve LeClaire, included Steve Colonies, Fran Donnelly, Carl Hutchinson, and Greg Wolodkin. Aside from its primary function as housing for the cannon, the shed will also serve as storage space for the Blacksmith’s Shop and the town woodwright.



*Design sketch of the cannon shed.*

## Sutton Historical Society Officers:

*President: Janice Swindell  
Vice President: Wally Baker  
Recording Secretary:  
Johanne Walker  
Corresponding Secretary:  
Chris Sinacola  
Treasurer: Ellie Hutchinson  
Historian: Carolyn Amaral  
Curator: Paul Brosnihan*

## Sutton Historical Society Board of Directors:

*Dennis Coll  
Keith Downer  
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Steve LeClaire  
Malcolm Pearson  
Ruth Putnam  
Gregory Wolodkin*

Based on sketch designs by restoration specialist Warren W. Lanpher, the shed will occupy a twenty by twenty-four foot space, some twenty feet behind and to the right of the Blacksmith Shop. It is modeled after a shed that served as lumber storage for the shop's woodwright until the 1950's, when it was torn down due to its dangerously dilapidated condition.

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## Upcoming Meetings:

*Tuesday, November 4th:*

Manchaug Baptist Church, 7:30 PM. Guest Speaker: Candie Carle, "The Victorian Lady"

*Tuesday, December 2nd:*

Annual Holiday Party, time and location to be announced. For details, contact Janice Swindell.

*Tuesday, January 20th\*:*

Asa Waters Mansion, 7:30 PM. Guest Speakers: Tom and Brenda Malloy, "Murder in New England: It's Written In Stone."

*\*Please note that this meeting falls on the third Tuesday of the month, and not the first Tuesday as usual.*

Suggestions and submissions for the *Bulletin* are accepted by mail and email:

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[stkellen@dcne.net](mailto:stkellen@dcne.net)

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The plans call for a post and beam construction style, beginning with a basic skeleton frame of cut pieces held together with wooden pegs. Once the skeleton has been constructed, the work crew will cover the sides with tongue-and-groove vertical pine boards and the roof with a sheathing of pine under cedar shingles. Sturdy oak planks, two inches thick, will make up the floor.

Since the beginning of construction in July, the site has been cleared and leveled, and a good amount of the frame pieces have been cut, including the lower and upper girts, the floor joists, and all the vertical support posts. Angle braces are still being worked on, and the lumber for the purlins has arrived. The work crew has most recently poured the concrete for the foundation piers, and is next planning on creating a gravel driveway.

The construction is estimated to be finished early next year. The workers plan on finishing cutting the frame pieces over the winter, and have an old-fashioned barn raising sometime in the middle of the spring. If you are interested in helping with the project, please contact either Steve LeClaire or Carl Hutchinson.

The Sutton Historical Society would like to extend its thanks to the many local contractors and businesses that have contributed material and labor to this special project: Andrew McCollom of Sutton, who donated his excavator and truck for the initial site clearing, Paul Hamm of Verizon, who drilled the holes for the concrete piers, Dave LaVallee of Lavallee Brothers Engineering in Sutton, who surveyed the site, Tom Bien of Bien Construction in Millbury, who worked with the forms and layout for the foundation piers, Jeff Helgerson of Helgerson Excavating in Charlton, who built up a gravel base under the site to improve drainage and is currently at work cutting and gravelling the driveway, and Aggregate Industries, who donated the concrete for the piers and the gravel for the site base and driveway.

While much has been done to further these building efforts, donations are still needed to complete the project. Donations can be sent to: Sutton Historical Society, 4 Uxbridge Road, Sutton, MA 01590. Please indicate that your donation is for the cannon shed project.

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The following are some images taken during early construction of the cannon shed, on location behind the Sherman Blacksmith Shop. (Photos courtesy of Ellie Hutchinson)



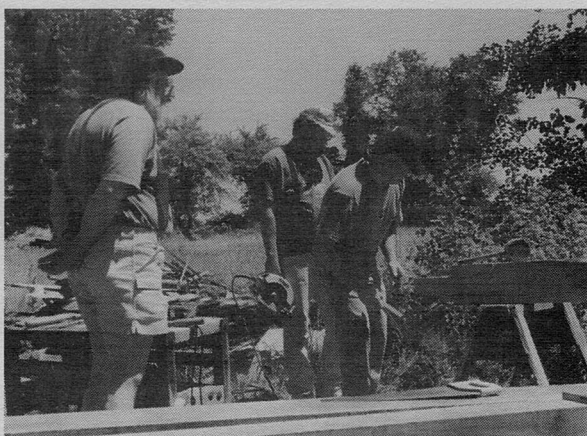
*Steve LeClaire (left) and Carl Hutchinson cutting parts for the frame.*



*(L-R) Carl Hutchinson, Steve LeClaire, Steve Colonies (cutting), and Fran Donnelly.*



*Greg Wolodkin (left) and Steve Colonies measure out a piece of the frame.*



*Steve Colonies (right) assesses the piece while Carl Hutchinson and Steve LeClaire look on.*



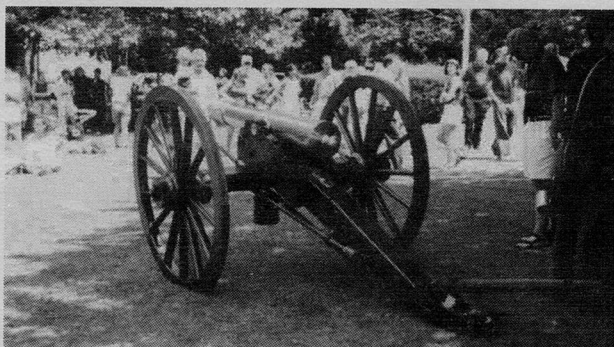
*The work crew consults on the cutting of a piece.*



*Work carries on at the site.*

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## The Story Behind the Cannon



*The newly restored and mounted cannon at its dedication ceremony, July 4th, 2000.*

“Old Ben” is one of four six-pound Napoleon cannons given to Sutton in the 1870’s by Congress in tribute to the over two hundred and twenty Sutton men who served in the Civil War. Two of the other guns currently stand at the entrance of the Sutton municipal building, and the fourth cannon was placed on the Matycek Triangle in Manchaug. “Old Ben” supposedly was placed in Wilkinsonville and stolen from that spot. It was later recovered from a scrap yard before being placed in the old hearse house on Boston Road. Left alone there for many years, the weight of the cannon pulled it down below the ground, where it was hidden. The floor was later paved over, further obscuring the location of the historic cannon

Due to the tireless efforts of the late Benjamin F. MacLaren, the cannon was rescued from its underground fate. MacLaren chopped through the blacktop floor to uncover the brass tube. Wallace E. Johnson volunteered his tractor to pick it out of the ground, and from there, the cannon was moved to the Sutton Historical Society’s Museum in the General Rufus Putnam Hall.

During a Civil War Living History demonstration in Sutton in 1998, the 25<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Volunteer reenactors saw the cannon, damaged from its time underground and still bearing traces of asphalt. The group decided to help raise funds to restore and carriage mount the cannon. MacLaren, then serving as President of the Historical Society, pledged the support of the Historical Society to the project.

The Board of Selectmen agreed to turn over custody of the gun, which is Town property, to the Historical Society, and approved the proposal to restore and mount it. To help pay for the cost of restoration, a more elaborate Civil War reenactment was planned for August of 1999. Tragically, MacLaren passed away in June 1999. The August Civil War encampment, complete with choreographed battles, netted some \$8,000 for the restoration effort. In November the gun was transported to Ashland, Kentucky, where Steen Cannons examined, cleaned, repaired and mounted it on a brand new carriage, complete with a set of tools for firing.

The cannon returned to Sutton in June 2000. On Independence Day, the town held a ceremony on the common, dedicating the cannon’s restoration to Benjamin F. MacLaren. The Board of Selectmen, the Sutton Historical Society, and MacLaren’s family and friends paid a much deserved tribute to the man who had such a passion for history, especially the history of Sutton. It is from this ceremony that the cannon acquired the nickname “Old Ben,” in memory of its rescuer.

*Steve LeClaire and Carl Hutchinson both contributed to this story.*

## Director's Profile: Carolyn Amaral

*By Kate Hutchinson*

Elected in October 2002 to the position of Historian, Carolyn Amaral has been a member of the Sutton Historical Society for the past fifteen years, and an active member for the past seven years. A Worcester native, she came to live in Sutton in 1966, where she has since become a very active member of the community.

Carolyn has been involved with the Sutton School system; she participates in a pen-pal program in which she writes letters to third graders. She also spends a fair amount of time reading stories to kindergarten children.

In recent years, Carolyn has been a part of the Sutton Council on Aging, serving

as a Council Alternate. She has also acted on the Long Range Planning Committee. Her other town serves includes a stint with the Sutton Housing Authority. She currently hold the position of President of the Friends of Sutton Elders. Her job as a Senior Companion for the Age Center in Worcester leads her to lend a hand at the Sutton Senior Center. In the past she has been the President of the Veterans of Foreign Wards Ladies Auxiliary.

But her interests are not solely in administration. She sings with the Sutton Serenaders, who, in addition to singing show tunes and song from the 1930's and 1940's, act out comedic skits. The group is planning

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### *"Old Ben" Appears at Blackstone Canal Anniversary*

On October 7th, The Sutton Militia and "Old Ben" made an appearance at the 175th Anniversary of the Opening of the Blackstone Canal, outside the Centrum Center in downtown Worcester. Peter Emerick led a fife and drum group from Old Sturbridge Village and the Sutton Militia, including Geoffrey Gardner, Tom Haynes, Carl Hutchinson, Ellie Hutchinson, and Steve LeClaire, fired the cannon at the commencement and ending of the ceremony.

Bobby Largess and his team of Belgians provided transport for the cannon to the ceremony and from the ceremony to Crompton Park in Worcester. At the park, "Old Ben" fired off nine shots during the course of a two hour concert featuring the group Plainfolk.

### *A Message from the President*

Our Annual Flea Market and Bake Sale at the Sherman Blacksmith Shop is a traditional Labor Day event in Sutton. In this space I want to thank all those who worked to pull this event together:

Ellie & Carl Hutchinson, Bob Anderson, Greg Wolodkin, Fran Donnelly, who set up (and took down) the tables and canopy; Steve Colonies, who welcomed visitors as he worked in the woodwright shop; Greg and Fran, who worked the forge; Helen Ordnung, Rita Johnson, Ruth Putnam, and Johanne Walker, who assisted in selling the delicious baked goods at the food table.

Hearty thanks goes out to all who baked, worked, or just dropped by to keep an eye on things! Your spirit of cooperation—so vital to our Historical Society—was much appreciated!

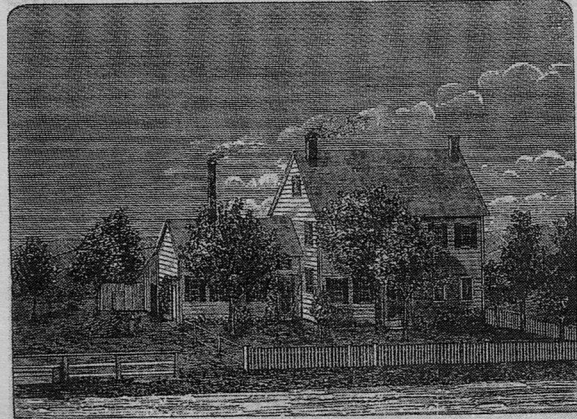
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to perform at the Sutton Senior Center and the Uxbridge Senior Center during their upcoming season.

As well as her talent for singing, Carolyn has a background in dance. For many years she ran the Carolyn Dance Studio based in Whitinsville with satellite studios around the Blackstone Valley.

Carolyn lives in the historic Jonas Batcheller House on Hough Road. She is only the fifth owner of the homestead, built by Jonas Batcheller circa 1840. (The house is listed in the *History of Sutton Vol. I*, on page 358.) Batcheller's son, Orlando, joined the Union Army late in the Civil War and was killed at the Battle of Antietam on September 7, 1862. Batcheller's brother, Origen, was a "devoted Christian" and a self-made scholar who published several pamphlets on Christian doctrine.

With her many contributions to the Sutton Senior Center and the Sutton Schools, Carolyn is a vibrant member of the community and a valuable member of the Sutton Historical Society.



RESIDENCE OF JONAS BATCHELLER.

*The Jonas Batcheller House, from the History of the Town of Sutton, Volume I.*

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Mailing label here