

Sutton Historical Society Bulletin



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Kate Hutchinson, Senior Editor
Malcolm Pearson, Editor Emeritus

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Celebrating Three Hundred Years

1704-2004: the Tri-Centennial of Sutton

By Kate Hutchinson

Sutton, as a town, has come a long way from its rustic origins as “a tract of waste land eight miles square,” as it was described in its charter. Its first settlers, the Marshes and the Johnsons, were described as “of sufficient nerve and enterprise,” daring to cross into this waste land to make their first cabins. The first winter experienced by these settlers was extremely harsh, with enough snowfall to cover all of the cabins. But the settlers persevered, and soon were joined by others.



Early records of town meetings show the progress of the town. In the early 1720's a meeting house was built, in 1733, the Town voted to devote money to schooling. In 1761, the Town experienced an earthquake and a severe drought. In 1777, Capts. Henry King and Samuel Trask were elected delegates to the County Congress. The Massachusetts Spy reported in 1796 that the Town, once harmonious in its leadership had split into several various religious factions. In 1817, a “line of stages” was established from Boston to Hartford, and several of the investors came from Sutton. In 1861, the Town voted on a number of resolutions supporting the Government of the United States against the “rebellious States,” citing non-support for the right of secession. Money was also set aside to aid those who chose to enlist in the war effort. Over time, several important historical figures visited Sutton, such as John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, the Marquis de Lafayette, and John



A celebratory button from the 1904 Bicentennial.

Sutton Historical Society Officers:

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Vice President: Wally Baker
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Corresponding Secretary: Chris Sinacola
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Dennis Coll
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Malcolm Pearson
Ruth Putnam
Gregory Wolodkin

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Upcoming Meetings:

Tuesday, February 3rd:

Field trip to the Salisbury Mansion in Worcester.

Tuesday, March 2nd:

Waters Farm, Sutton, 7:30. Guest Speaker, Bud Gurney, "Maple Sugaring." Demonstration, weather permitting.

Tuesday, April 5th:

Manchaug Baptist Church, 7:30. Guest Performer: Fiddler Dave Poland, "Folk & American Music of All Eras" (Co-hosted by Millbury Historical Society)

Tuesday, May 4th:

Manchaug Baptist Church, 7:30. "Purgatory Chasm and the Geology of Sutton"

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

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Karen Board Moran as Lucy Waters Phelps.

Paul Jones.

Today, Sutton still carries reminders of its roots as a rural New England farming town. The Town Common remains mostly intact, and there are a number of historical homes still preserved to-day. In most places, from the roads, you can still see the outlines of farm land in the existing stone walls. Names of early families, such as King, Putnam, Stockwell, Sibley, Waters, and many more, are found among Sutton's residents, as well as in many place names.

In honor of the Town's Tri-Centennial, several events have

been planned for throughout the year. Among these events are several re-enactments, ranging from a Revolutionary War Encampment to depicting individuals characters from Sutton's history. Among these re-enactors will be Karen Board Moran, portraying Lucy Waters Phelps. (See the *Historical Portrait* on Page 3.) Mrs. Moran has put a great deal of time and effort into researching this Suffragist, visiting her historic home, and even archiving her letters. In the spirit of Lucy Waters Phelps, Mrs. Moran will be leading a "Get Out the Vote" Suffragist Rally on Sunday, October 3rd at Waters Farm. We hope that our members will be on hand to participate. For a full calendar of events, please visit the Sutton 300 website at <http://www.sutton300.com> or your local Sutton 300 Store.

The Historical Society, in time for Sutton's 300th Anniversary, will be reprinting the Town History, Volume I. Copies are already available at a cost of \$90.00 plus shipping. To order one, please contact Carl Hutchinson at 508 865 3010.

The Historical Society will also be constructing a float for the Town Parade on Sunday, September 12th. If you are interested in helping in the design of the float, or construction of the float, please contact Ellie Hutchinson.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For the upcoming issue, we are looking for stories and pictures from those who remember the 250th Town Anniversary. If you would like to share your memories, please send them (handwritten or typed) to Kate Hutchinson, 27 Vinton St. #3, So. Boston, MA, 02127. Pictures will be gently treated and returned.

Historical Profile: Lucy Waters Phelps

By Karen Board Moran

Lucy Waters Phelps was born in the centennial year of our country in Sutton, Massachusetts. Her grandfather and father ran the saw and grist mills in the village of West Sutton. Julia Matilda Waters, her mother, had attended the Oread Collegiate Institute in Worcester, a pioneer college for women modeled after Brown University that only allowed male students at the time. Her mother was a natural nurse and midwife for the West Sutton community. Her father, Henry H. Phelps, made a machine for making paper in 1826 and patented a rag washer in 1843.

Lucy taught at West Sutton School for 21 years or more, but did not limit her activities to this field. She was an active member of the American Press Writer's Association for more that 25 years.

As a single woman, Lucy was aware she had been born three years after Massachusetts women gained the right to vote in school committee elections; and yet, no Sutton woman had registered to vote. At age 21, she led the way by becoming the first woman in town to register to vote and became an ardent suffragist. She was a member of the Worcester Equal Franchise Club that became the League of Women Voters in 1920. By 1912 only about 1/3 of area women had registered to vote. Locals remember the suffrage bluebird symbol nailed on each pillar in front of her home reminding male citizens to cast their ballots in support of woman's right to become voting members in the American democracy. She also wore the suffragist banner and may have marched in the October 30 parade in Worcester in 1914.

A pillar in her community, Lucy helped organize the West Sutton Community League for the betterment of West Sutton in 1928. After retiring from teaching she be-



Photo courtesy of Karen Board Moran

came an entrepreneur with her brother Charles. They ran Paine Haven on Central Turnpike, a roadside stand selling ice cream and candy—"The Pride of the Pike".

Like teachers everywhere, Lucy influenced the future by shaping her students lives, but also fought for woman's rights as an American citizen. She is remembered as "a grand lady" by her students. She challenged them to present poems by memory on Memorial Day. Her strong commitment to community ensured a positive present. Many members of the Phelps family are buried in the West Sutton Cemetery. Some family members live in Lisbon, Iowa.

The historic picture of her house can be found at www.geocities.com/suttonmass and her 1908 Blickensderfer typewriter can be seen at the Sutton Historical Society or in the virtual museum on the website. She is buried in the West Sutton Cemetery at the right end of the road closest to West Sutton.

A Message from the President

By Janice Swindell

Greetings in this eventful new year of 2004—Sutton's

300th anniversary! Many events have been planned that will allow us to review and marvel at Sutton's past. We should take every opportunity to learn about our heritage. Opportunities, provided by the Sutton 300 Committee, include a Thanksgiving Day dinner at Waters Farm, a Revolutionary War encampment, a visit by Ben Franklin, an old house tour, and a Suffragist rally with Lucy Waters Phelps.

Our own Program Committee has lined up some interesting and worthwhile meeting events. Please join us to learn, not only about Sutton, but also about neighboring areas in Massachusetts and Connecti-

cut.

Once again, we welcome your annual dues and gifts. Our members have been generous in the past, and the officers and Board of Directors truly appreciate their support. However, as much as we need your financial support, we also need you. This year, volunteers will be needed for events such as the House Tours on May 16th at the Eight Lots School house, General Rufus Putman School/Historical Society Museum, and the Manchaug Baptist Church. Please indicate your willingness to help staff these building on May 16th.

Finally, the Sutton Historical Society is sponsoring an Olde Tyme Radio Show featuring Mel Simons on June 27th at the Senior Center. This program will follow an old-style Community Picnic, and the entire afternoon should provide wholesome family entertainment. Hope to see you there!

Sutton Historical Society
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Mailing label here