

The Sutton Historical Society Bulletin

D e d i c a t e d t o p r e s e r v i n g o u r h i s t o r i c a l
i n h e r i t a n c e f o r f u t u r e g e n e r a t i o n s .

F o u n d e d D e c e m b e r 8 , 1 9 6 9

In This Issue:

Eight Lots School

Message from the President

Nathan Lombard

-Society Officers- 2013-2015

President-Brian Stevenson

Vice President-Dave Pizzi

Secretary-Joyce Smith

Treasurer-Marian King

Historian-Johanne Walker

-Board of Directors- 2012-2014

Keith Downer

Marjorie Duff

Pennie Putnam Linder

Alice Shaw

Linda Sinacola

Norman Storey

Museum Curator-Wally Baker

Museum Curator Emeritus-Paul Brosnihan

Blacksmith-Fran Donnelly

"LOTS" HAPPENING AT THE EIGHT LOTS SCHOOL

by Joyce A. Smith

HISTORY

The Eight Lots School is Old. No one disputes that. What is not known is exactly how old it really is. It is located at the junction of Eight Lots Rd and West Sutton Road. The unusual name stems from the 8 forty-acre lots that were apportioned to some of the earliest settlers in town. The one room school was built to educate those neighborhood children. Eight Revolutionary war soldiers are supposed to have attended, including General Rufus Putnam. If that is correct, the school had to predate the Revolutionary War. The building may have been there without the land being deeded to the town, or it may have existed in another location prior to 1784. It is a mystery yet to be solved.

The school was closed in 1896, when there were 13 pupils, with an average attendance of 7. The teacher received \$210 for teaching 7.5 months.

The school re-opened in 1911, as the Eight Lots (District 3) population had increased. It closed for the last time in 1918, when Lelland Hill and Putnam Hill were also closed. In researching information from town reports, it was getting hard to find places for teachers to board. Can you imagine going home to your students' homes where you lived for a month at a time? It was suggested by the superintendant that "dormitories" could be built with a sitting room and bedroom, and a small kitchen were the teacher could hold cooking classes. In Manchaug,

Cont. Page 2

Cont. "Lots" Happening

it was suggested to convert some of the school to a teacher's apartment. Technology also influenced decisions to consolidate. Automobiles and better roads allowed for better transportation to a central site. The 14 district schools were on their way out.

Eunice E. Perry (later King) was one of the last teachers at Eight Lots. My mother, Belle Putnam, very fondly remembered her as a wonderful first grade teacher. Eunice taught in 1915 for \$510 for 3 terms, and in 1916 for \$700. She had an advantage as she was a local girl and could live at home. The 1917 year was split between Eunice and Ruth L Putnam. In 1918, Eunice taught at the Center School and Ruth Putnam at Eight Lots. The sign presently outside the school lists Ruth Putnam (wife of Ruben Moore) as the last teacher. (Not to be confused with Ruth Shaw Putnam.)

The Eight Lots School Association was formed in 1911, when 150 people gathered. It included teachers, pupils and residents, past and present. It was voted to hold a reunion every year, similar to the Old Stone School association. Reunions were held yearly, except for 1942-1945 when gas rationing was a patriotic duty. I remember attending reunions with my mother and participating in a 3-legged sack race.

The Association took over ownership of the school after it was closed. The school was transferred to the Historical Society in 1990. The Historical Society has been fortunate to have the help of Eagle Scouts in various renovation projects over the years. Dan Pizzi (from the Eight Lots District) did his Eagle Scout project doing renovations to the school, with the help of his father Dave Pizzi and other Scouts. Currently Mackenzie Connors is completing his Eagle Scout badge as well. We ordered new siding and exterior boards for the gable end. Mackenzie painted them and will assist with the installation of that material this spring.

PRESENT

By Brian Stevenson

The Sutton Historical Society holds an annual potluck supper the first Tuesday in August at the Eight Lots School. August 2012 was the first potluck I had attended at the school. There were obvious issues with the buildings structure. The floor in front of the chalkboard was sagging due to the weight of the wood stove. The lower trim board that goes around the building was rotted in multiple places. The outer boards on the gable ends had insect holes and woodpecker holes within it and the cut granite (Foundation Stone) that the building sits on were either leaning in or falling out of place.

Assessing a job like this is not easy. You don't know what you will find until you start removing some of the exterior trim boards. We were not sure how to approach this project but we knew we had to act fast or we were sure to lose this iconic building. So we started on the east side of the building because it was showing the most signs of fatigue. As we removed some of the outer boards

Cont. Page 3

the ants started pouring out. This is a sign of excessive moisture. We replaced that sill and buttoned it up for the first year of revamp. Spring 2013 we resumed. We removed all the lower trim only to find that eighty percent of the sill was rotted and needed to be replaced. We removed all the floor boards only to discover one of the interior sills (Floor Joist Supports) was totally gone and one third of another needed repair and most of the floor joists needed to be replaced as well.

That was as far as we got in year two. Year three / 2014 brings similar unknowns. We know we have some rot issues with what is called the top plate. This is the beam that sits on top of all the posts and the roof rafters rest on it. Again we will not know the severity of the rot until we dig in to it. After the top plate is repaired and any rotten roof rafters are replaced we will start replacing the roof, replace the siding that was removed, replace the wood on the gable ends and any trim boards that are missing. We would also like to put the electrical feed to the building underground and replace the service panel. We have also scheduled routine visits with a pest control company to eliminate any ant or termite issues going forward. All restoration activities will replicate original era construction practices to ensure historical significance, i.e. mortising sills and floor joists, using rough cut pine for sheathing, rough cut replacement floor joists, wide pine floor boards etc.

The initial estimate to complete the renovation of the Eight Lots School is \$50,000. Obviously we are trying our best to keep costs down and we are fortunate to have received many generous donations. Along with those donations we have a crew of volunteers that are dedicated to our cause "SOS" (Save Our School). At the rate we are going I see this project being completed and reopened sometime in 2015. You can find a detailed report on the Eight Lots School project on our Facebook page. Sutton Historical Society, Inc.

Some interesting finds occurred along the way. A letter from a student to a brother was found in the wall, and a test on Roman numerals was found. The test belonged to Hope Freeland (sister of Faith Freeland Smith) and was dated 1912.

Generous monetary donations have been made in memory of the following: Eunice Perry King, Stanton Putnam, Alice Riley, Bea Paine, Ruth Shaw Putnam, Belle Putnam Smith and others. Bobby Shaw donated wood for the sills from his saw mill. Thanks to the dedicated crew for doing the work.

The Eight Lots School project will require more financial backing as well as volunteer help so please consider helping us. If you wish to donate in memory of a specific person or to donate to SOS, please send a check to Sutton Historical Society, 4 Uxbridge Road, Sutton, Ma. 01590.

The Sutton Historical Society is an organization that exists to promote research and learning in the history of the town of Sutton; to acquire, protect and preserve property, historical documents, relics, and objects; and to promote the celebration of patriotic and historic anniversaries.

We own, and currently are preserving and protecting, a turn of the century Blacksmith Shop in Sutton Center and an 18th century one room schoolhouse in the Eight Lots District. We also maintain a museum in General Rufus Putnam Hall in Sutton Center.

All persons who love the town of Sutton and who wish to see its historical character preserved are welcome to become members of our active and growing society.

Letter from the President

One area we are improving upon is communication. Some might wonder who we are and some might be surprised we still exist. Let me tell you the Sutton Historical Society does exist and we are getting things done. Take a look at the new tin roof on the Sherman Blacksmith Shop in Sutton Center and stop by when the flag is out or a truck is in the yard, to see Fran Donnelly working the forge.

Stop by the Eight Lots School (Circa 1785-1790) almost any Saturday and or Sunday (Spring through Fall) and see how the renovations are going with that building.

We also occupy the General Rufus Putnam building next to the fire station and Town Hall. Some might remember this building as the original Free Masons Olive Branch Lodge, The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) meeting house, the former library or school. The Town of Sutton has been gracious to let us use this building as a museum, with one stipulation: the Historical Society is responsible for building maintenance. Currently the museum is closed due to the fact that the facility needs some attention. The main issue is no heat, which causes excessive moisture within the building, causing damage to the contents. The way to remedy this issue is temperature control. We need a new furnace, AC Heat Pump, dehumidifiers installed, and gutters. All of these upgrades are required to protect sensitive artifacts. We also need a new electrical service which would include a new 200 amp panel, new lighting, and upgrades to accommodate the 220 volt heat pump, among other electrical updates. Once these issues are resolved, we will need to focus on cleaning, painting, reorganizing and sorting material. Then we need to set up our displays.

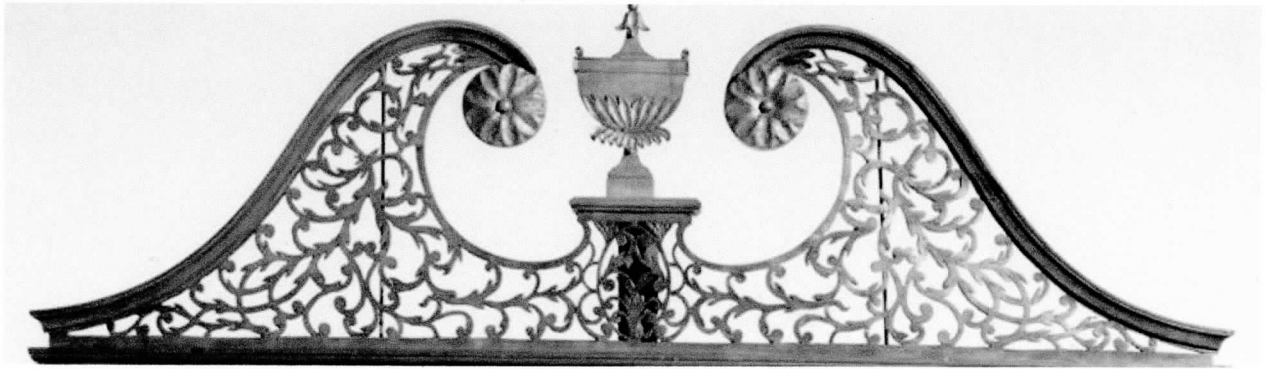
We are working hard and don't want our efforts going unnoticed or underutilized. We want to establish pride and historical interest within our community. Our intent is to proudly display the historical artifacts, and welcome people to visit and enjoy them. To accomplish this we strongly believe that communication is the key. We want to complete the renovations of the Eight Lots School and the General Rufus Putnam Museum, and have them open on a regular basis.

Currently the SHS has roughly eighty registered members. Out of those eighty members, roughly twelve to twenty are considered active members. In order to continue to grow and succeed in our mission, we will need help from members who can provide volunteer services on various activities, as well as to find ways to secure federal, state, local government funding and other financial assistance.

The Sutton Historical Society meets the first Tuesday of the month. Currently (during the cold weather months) we meet at the First Congregational Church, with plans to eventually hold meetings at the General Rufus Putnam building. To find more information about the Sutton Historical Society and how you can help, please visit our Facebook page (Sutton Historical Society Inc.)

Thank you and we hope to hear from you soon,

Brian Stevenson



Delightfully Designed: The Furniture and Life of Nathan Lombard

In the OSV Visitor Center Gallery
Through May 4, 2014

Delightfully designed and intricately inlaid, the furniture of Nathan Lombard (1777-1847) stands out among the rich traditions of cabinetmaking found in rural Massachusetts in the early 1800s. Nathan's furniture has a vitality and charm that easily captures the eye even today, with inlays of charismatic eagles, elaborate vines, and floral motifs.

As a boy raised in Brimfield, married in Sturbridge, and settled in Sutton, Nathan's story is a very local one and the exhibit at Old Sturbridge Village will represent the largest assembling of Lombard's furniture since they left his workshop. Many of the pieces on view are held in private collections and this exhibit will be an exciting opportunity for his pieces to return home to central Massachusetts.

New discoveries – including family narratives, early daguerreotype images of the Lombard family, and personal family artifacts – help bring the Lombard family to life. Hand in hand with celebrating his furniture, we look forward to celebrating Nathan Lombard the cabinetmaker, father, and community member, and revealing the true person behind these extraordinary objects.

SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.
4 UXBRIDGE ROAD
SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS 01590

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY JULY 1ST MEETING

Join us on the second Tues., July 9th at 6:30 pm for our annual Pot-Luck supper at the Sherman Blacksmith Shop in Sutton Center. Because of Independence Day, the meeting was moved to July 9th. Come see the water wheel that was donated and explore the blacksmith shop. We have great cooks and always have a variety of main dishes, sides, and deserts, so bring your appetite, along with a folding chair.

SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AUGUST 5TH MEETING

The annual pot-luck supper at the Eight Lots School will be held at 6:30. Come see the progress on the renovations of the school house! Please bring a pot-luck dish and a folding chair.

As always, anyone interested in any of these events are welcome to join us. Upcoming meetings are listed in the Sutton-Millbury Chronicle, Towns section of the Worcester Telegram, The Uxbridge Times and our Facebook page.