



# The Sutton Historical Society Bulletin

Dedicated to preserving our historical inheritance for future generations.

Founded December 8, 1969

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## John H. Dudley

75th Anniversary of His Death

By: Joyce A. Smith

May 10, 2018, will be 75 years since he was killed. John H. Dudley, 23 years old, was shot down over Sicily. Many of you know the Dudley-Gendron Post but may not know that John H. Dudley and Henry Gendron, both killed in WWII, are the source of the names. Henry Gendron was killed on Dec. 23, 1944 while serving in the 643 Tank Destroyer Battalion in Belgium.

John H. Dudley (Dinty to those of us in the family) was born March 8, 1920, the only surviving son of John C. Dudley and Flora E. Holbrook Dudley. His older sister had lived only 1 day. He had red hair, a great smile, and loved the outdoors and adventure. Joining the military to defend the country was a family tradition. His father served in France in WWI and his mother went to Washington, D.C., and worked for the war effort.

Grandfather Wilder S. Holbrook was in the Mass 15th and was wounded at Ball's Bluff in the Civil War. He had many ancestors in the Revolution, including Robert Sutton, who was one of the 12 (dressed as Indians), who burned the British Ship Gaspee which had run aground in Narragansett Bay. A Mayflower ancestor was Henry Sampson, whose granddaughter Deborah received a pension for masquerading as a man and fighting in the Revolution.

Dinty attended local schools and then Deerfield Academy. After graduation, he and a friend took a 1200-mile trip to Canada (starting with 6 spare tires), and returning home with 75 cents, great stories and having learned a lot about car mechanics!

cont...



He also went to Europe and the Berlin Olympics in 1936, where he saw Hitler across the stadium. He attended WPI where he went into the Air Corps, trained at Ft. Devens, and took two summer courses with the Marine Reserves.

He left WPI for the Air Force early in the War and was assigned as a B-17 tail gunner, stationed in Morocco, with bombing missions over Italy and Southern Europe. His plane, "Mrs. O'Reilly's Daughter", was shot down over Borizzo, Sicily, on May 10, 1943. He was not scheduled to fly that day. Two of the crew were in sick bay and he took their place.

The following is from the "new" Town History, Vol. II. "John Holbrook's personality and service record are best explained by the telegram, addressed to the Citizens of Sutton, when the Air Medal with four clusters and the Purple Heart were awarded, posthumously.

"Let it be known because it was definitely so, Red Dudley was a true American if ever I've seen one in this man's army. No better gunner have I ever known, not only because he was a good shot. It takes more than that to be a gunner on a Flying Fortress. In Army language, he had "guts" and the uncanny ability to remain calm in the most perilous conditions. My admiration for him became unlimited after completion of a mission on February 4, a terrific encounter with the enemy! Shell burst, through the right elevator, tore holes all around R.D. His parachute behind him torn to bits; he did not lose his cool red head. The continual vibration of the guns blazing away was most comforting. It meant Red was taking good care of the rear. Reliable men in our wing ships reported tail gunner in O'Reilly's Daughter downed 2 Messerschmidts. Red did not claim any. I asked him why. He replied, 'I want no glory. This is my job and I aim to get many more before they get me.' He alone knows how many more went down under his blazing guns. Let Red live in your mind as he does in mine! Let us never forget he gave his life so that you can go on living in our good old American way. God bless you and Mr. and Mrs. Dudley".  
Written by Lt. H. M. Goldberg.

A cousin, Philip Smith, remembers writing to Dinty in the service. "I used to write him letters using a goose quill pen from feathers picked up from his old farm yard. He was a good writer and had his father's sense of humor and he would always write back. It was eerie to receive a hand-written reply from him, censored as all letters from the Front were, two weeks after the officers appeared on Buttonwood Ave, to let his parents know that he was officially missing in action."

On March 8, Dinty's birthday, Aunt Flora and Uncle John always had the family together to remember him. Phil remembers that Uncle John would read from the diary which Dinty kept when he was stationed outside of Rabat in Morocco. I only remember the last "birthday" gathering in 1951 when I was almost 4. My memory was of Uncle John taking us little kids to see the ducks, geese, and newborn lambs across the street. Uncle John died suddenly on Dec. 23, 1951.

Prior to his death, John C. Dudley was chairman of the committee to write Vol. II of the Town History. He wrote the section on Purgatory Chasm State Reservation where he was a member of the commission and a superintendent. The Chasm had been acquired from Whitins Machine Works and in 1950 the Dudleys gave the 70-acre John H. Dudley Memorial Forest in memory of their son. A Memorial Trail was laid out in honor of the 8 crew members killed while on the same mission and 1 killed on a previous mission, along with Thomas Conlon and Hyman Goldberg that were the two hospitalized that day.

As you enter Purgatory from the North, there is a ledge on the East side with a plaque dedicating the recreation area. Vol. II states "This area is dedicated to 'The Outdoor Life of the American Boy,' and is intended to be used primarily as a camping site and recreation ground for Boy Scout and other youth



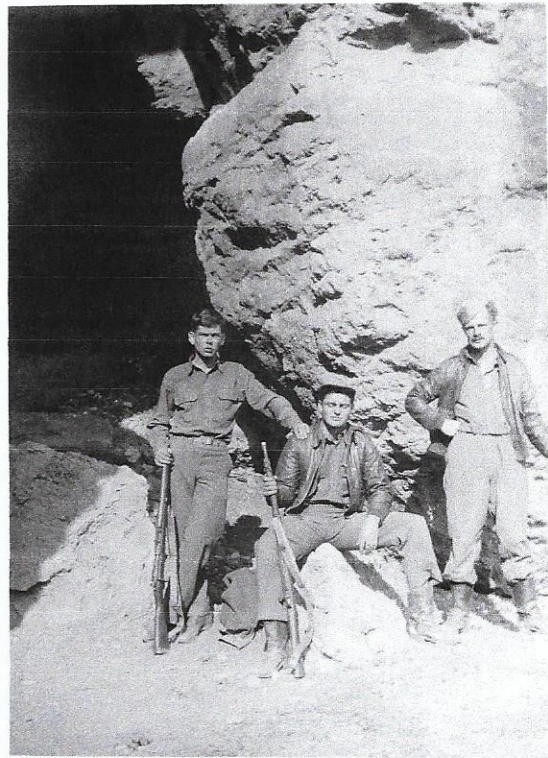
organizations.” This statement was written by Dinty’s father in his work on the Vol II Sutton History.

For about 70 years, the wishes were honored and that is what this section of Purgatory was used for. Many Boy Scouts have fond memories of camping there. A few years ago, Boy Scouts were prohibited from using the area. To me this dishonors the memory of 3 generations of family, the last of whom made the ultimate sacrifice, and the Gold Star parents who donated 70 acres as a permanent memory to their only son to be enjoyed by other people’s children.

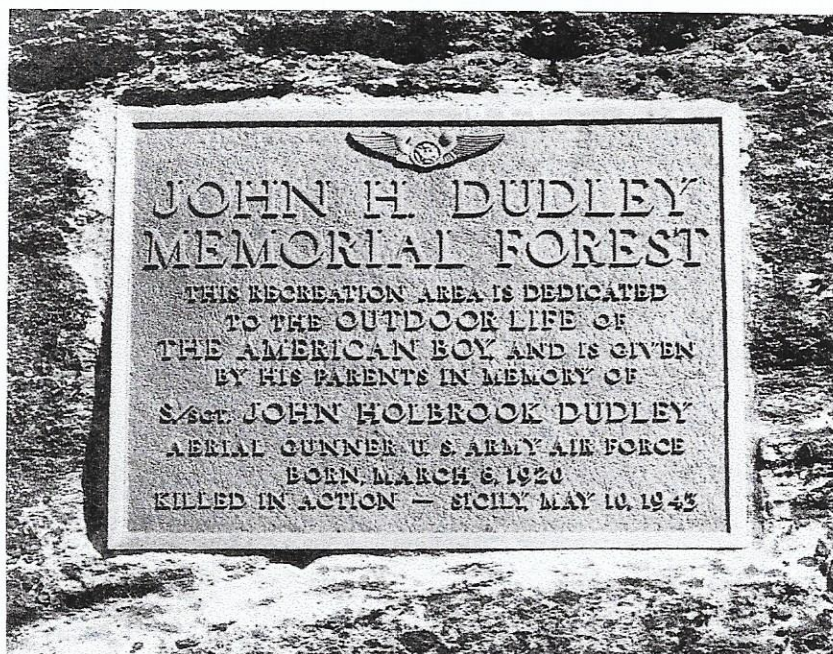
May 10, 2018, is the 75th anniversary of Dinty’s death.



Staff Sergeant John H. Dudley



Dinty and friends in Morocco



Memorial plaque at Purgatory Chasm

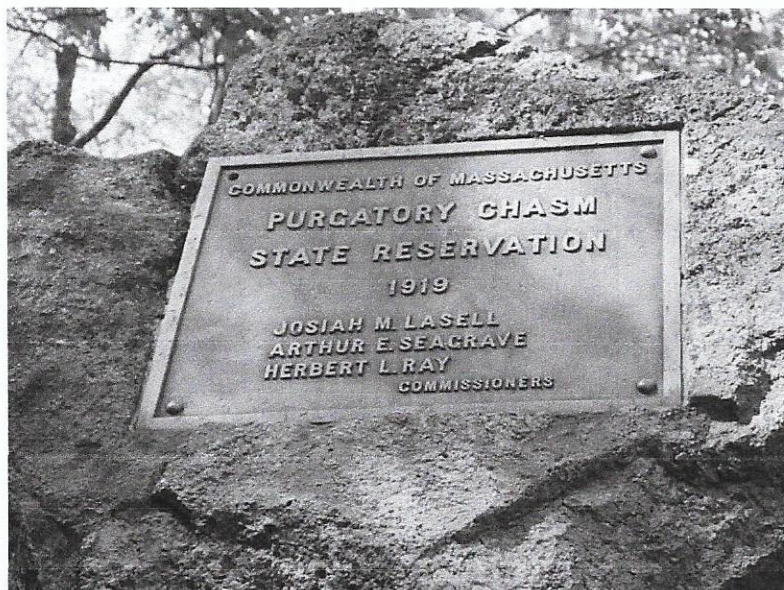


## Purgatory Chasm - A Hiking Gateway

State Reservation

1919 to 2018

By: Christine Watkins



Sutton Town Resident and member of the State Legislature, Herbert L. Ray understood the beauty and value of Purgatory Chasm, held privately by Whitin Machine Works into the early 20th century. His diligent efforts over a period of 5 years resulted in the establishment of Purgatory Chasm State Reservation under the Acts of 1919, Chapter 327. On July 10, 1920, Whitin Machine Works received \$3,202.50 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts which transferred approximately 62 acres to the State.

Herbert L. Ray was appointed one of three members of the first Purgatory Chasm State Reservation Commission. Mr. Ray continued on the Commission until his death in 1941. Sutton town resident, John C. Dudley, replaced Mr. Ray and served until 1943. Mr. Dudley continued as superintendent of Purgatory until his retirement in 1949. Currently, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for the State of Massachusetts manages Purgatory Chasm.

Over the years, additional small parcels were purchased from, and donated by, private owners. On December 29, 1950, John C. and Flora Holbrook Dudley generously donated 70 acres of their land to be held and used as a part of the Purgatory Chasm State Reservation and designated as "The John H. Dudley Memorial Forest" in memory of their son killed in action during WWII.

The DCR continues to increase the acreage of both the Sutton State Forest and the Purgatory Chasm State Reservation. Through work with the Metacomet Land Trust, citizens from Douglas and Sutton, including prior town administrator, Patricia Nedoroscik, as well as David Podles, supervisor at Purgatory, set about to create a "greenway." The goal of these efforts is the eventual ability of hikers to traverse from Sutton State Forest and Purgatory Chasm to Douglas State Forest and beyond into Rhode Island and Connecticut. This greenway is important for land protection and as a wildlife corridor for the migratory routes of several species. To learn more about the greenway, visit <http://metacometlandtrust.org/protected-lands/>.

A visual of protected and unprotected open space land in Sutton can be obtained at <https://www.axisgis.com/SuttonMA/>. After "agreeing" to enter the site, click on the blue "layers" button on the left side which opens a menu. Clicking on the + sign next to the options allows you to see specific areas on the town map, such as open spaces, zoning, wetlands, historic locations.

In addition to Purgatory Chasm and Sutton State Forest, hiking enthusiasts can enjoy these local hiking trails:



Visit the **Douglas State Forest** where hiking trails abound! Hike around the forest with parking just down the road from Manchaug Pond or go further and hike up the Midstate Trail or Southern New England Trunkline Trail. <https://www.mass.gov/locations/douglas-state-forest>

The **Midstate Trail** passes through the Manchaug Pond watershed to the west of the lake, running north to south across the Commonwealth from Ashburnham at the New Hampshire border through Douglas to the Rhode Island line. Join a group and join others on a day hike, picking up the yellow triangles in Oxford, Douglas or Sutton. <http://www.midstatetrail.org/>

**Southern New England Trunkline Trail**, offers 22 miles of rail trail which stretches from the Douglas State Forest to the Franklin State Forest.

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-central/southern-new-england-trunkline-trail.html>

**Waters Farm** in Sutton offers a mall network of hiking trails as well as events from walking tours of the historical home donated by past MPA secretary Dorothea Waters Moran to the town of Sutton Conservation Commission, to their October Farm Days Fall Festival.

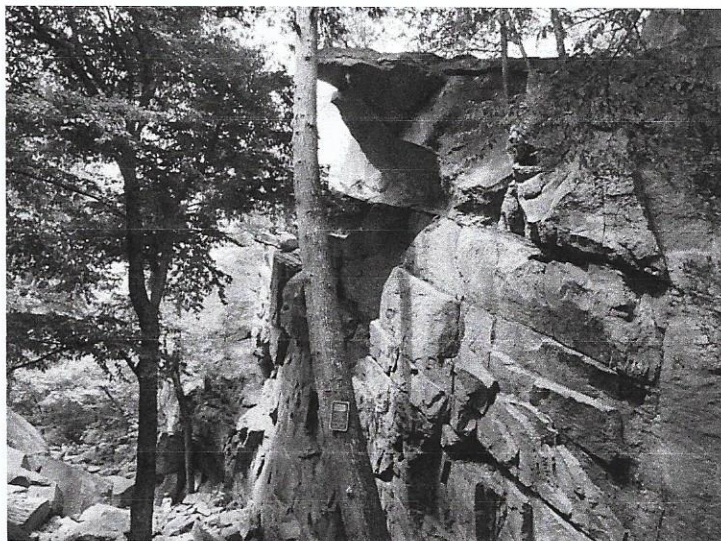
[http://www.suttonma.org/Pages/SuttonMA\\_BComm/trails](http://www.suttonma.org/Pages/SuttonMA_BComm/trails).

## Who was Thordis Tapper?

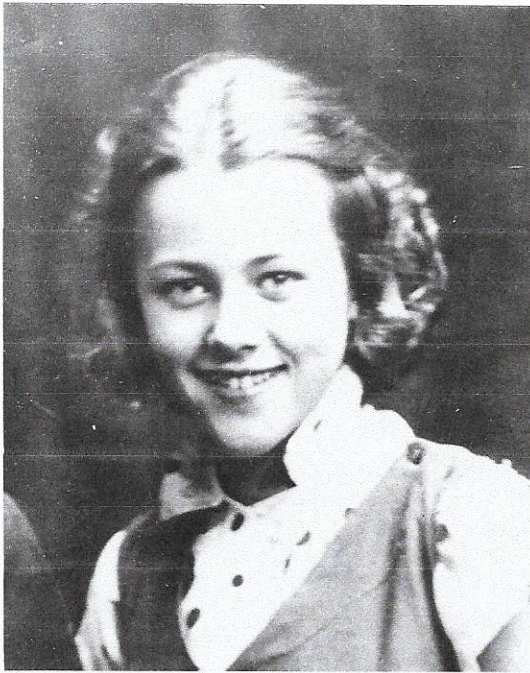
By: Christine Watkins

In its long history, only eight fatal falls have occurred in Purgatory Chasm. The first accident was on July 7, 1876. 59 years later, the second occurred on October 27, 1935. The six remaining falls occurred between March 1973 and July 2012. Four females and four males have suffered this fate.

The town history identifies the first casualty simply as Mrs. George Prentice. Misidentified in subsequent newspaper articles as Mrs. Pierce, her name has nearly been forgotten. With the current availability of genealogical records, this woman can be identified as, Ellen Frances (Derby) Prentice. She did not immediately succumb to her injuries, but died at home in Middletown, CT, on August 23, 1876, at the age of 43. She is the oldest of the eight casualties. As described in the [History of the Town of Sutton Volume I, 1704-1876](#), Ellen had been sitting on a bank near the rock which overhangs the Chasm at the deepest point with her husband. Rising to go away, she indicated she wanted to take one more look and approached the edge at which point she became dizzy and fell 60 feet to the rocks below. This area is known as Lover's Leap.







The second, and youngest casualty was Worcester North High School senior, Thordis Tapper. Miss Tapper fell in the same spot identified as Lover's Leap. As described in the Worcester Telegram dated Monday, October 28, 1935, Miss Tapper noticed a ledge a few feet below the rim. Facing the laughing friends and her sisters, she carefully lowered herself to it, telling her friends she wished to look under the overhanging rock. She held on to the upper rock. Dead leaves, slippery from recent rains, offered treacherous footing for her high-heeled slippers. Thordis slipped on the treacherous crag and, before the horrified eyes of 12 spectators, among them her two sisters, fell 75 feet to instant death on the jagged rocks below just missing a couple hiking in the Chasm below. Thordis was 11 days shy of her 18th birthday.



The Chasm itself can be safely hiked by following the painted "markers" which guide the hiker through the floor of the Chasm. Tragedy has struck, however, when individuals traverse the upper edges of the Chasm and look down.

Park information, found at <https://www.mass.gov/locations/purgatory-chasm-state-reservation> clearly lists:

Restrictions:

- Keep clear from edges of chasm
- Avoid climbing during or after inclement weather as rocks will be slippery

As the weather warms up, and visitors begin to flock to this area, we should all heed the lessons from the past, and follow all the rules and guidelines for safe hiking through this natural geological attraction.

## **The Barnett Road Schoolhouse**

as told by Harriet Van Dyke

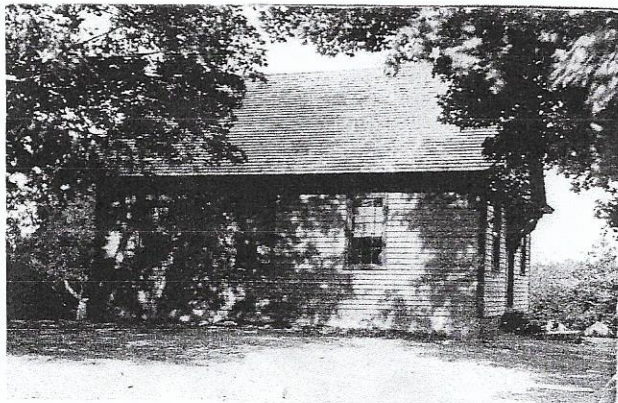
This Schoolhouse, which is currently a private residence, was built in 1886 for the South Sutton Quabbin School District. The previous two schools for this district had been destroyed by fires in 1876 and 1885.

The building consisted of one classroom and a narrow room to hang jackets, etc. Toilets were in a separate building.



According to a former student, the room held grades 1-8 into the 1920s, was reduced to grades 1-6 around 1929, and by 1949, grades 1-4 attended school there.

The Schoolhouse was auctioned off by the Town in 1951.



Side View of Barnett Road School



New Well Being Drilled in 1940

SOUTH SUTTON SCHOOL

Grade One

Beverly Ruth Hare  
Joseph Paul Martin

Grade Two

Stephen Kingston Frieswick  
Edith Helen Garcelon  
Ruth Elaine Garcelon  
Donald Frederick Goodwin  
William David Lyman  
Leonard Clarence Swart

Grade Three

Charles Douglas Lyman

Grade Four

Judith May Bergeron  
Martin Earle Dandridge  
Janet Ruth Goodwin  
Carolyn Mae Hare  
Marilyn Grace Hare  
Robert Kenneth Swart

Photo taken June 1936



**Back Row:** Gloria Latour, Alice LaFlamme, Doris Steele, Betty Albee

**3rd Row:** Gerald Heslinga, Leo LaFlamme, Donald Wood, John Kortecamp, Kenneth Ashworth, Buster Kortecamp

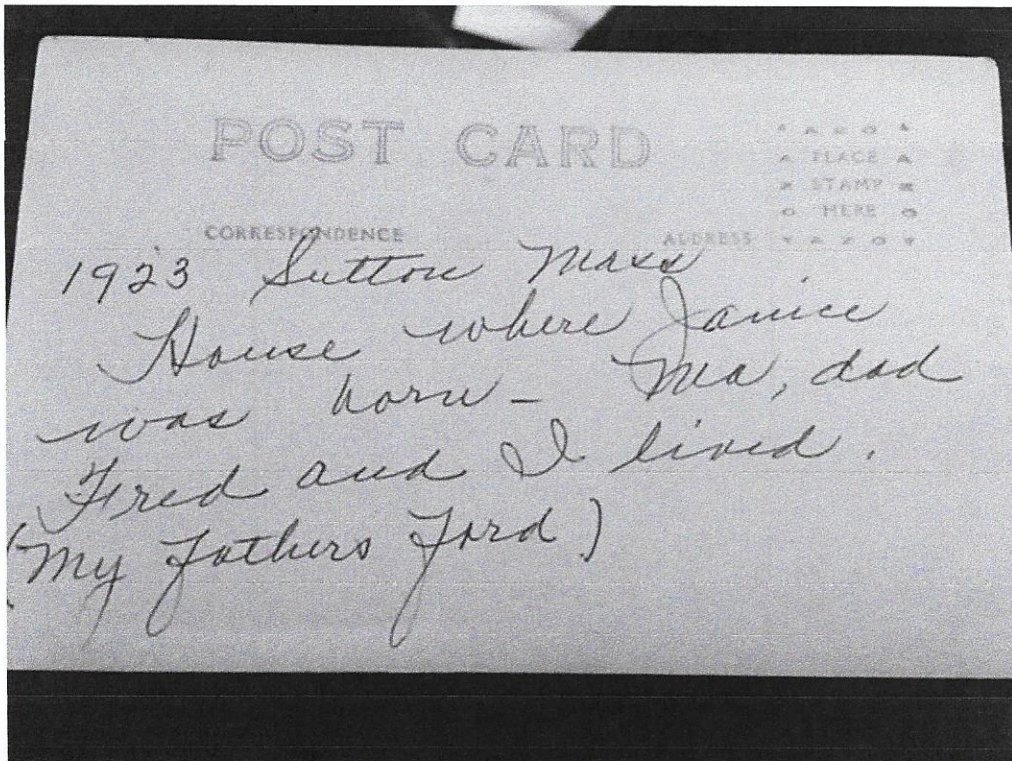
**2nd Row:** Charles Dautrich, John Steele, Harold Youngma, Bobby Steele, Lester Albee, Billy Steele, Buster Dautrich, Nelson Wood

**Front Row:** Dottie Wood, Carolyn Boutlier, Shirley Latour, Pauline Lambert, Harriet Barnett



## Do You Recognize This?

We have been contacted by a representative of the Auburn Historical Society requesting if any of our members can recognize the house in the photograph and provide any names of individuals who may have lived there. Send responses to [jasetta@verizon.net](mailto:jasetta@verizon.net).





## General Rufus Putnam Museum

Memorial Day Veteran's Exhibit

Monday, May 28, 2018

10 am - 1 pm



As part of the town's Memorial Day observations, the Sutton Historical Society will be showcasing war memorabilia and local soldier histories at the General Rufus Putnam Museum, 4 Uxbridge Road. The general public is welcome and encouraged to stop in and view this relevant exhibit. The local parade begins at the Sutton Town Common at 11 am. Ceremonies conclude at the school complex at noon.

Howard Barnett - WWI Soldier - Sutton

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES

Please note the annual membership fees are due by February 2018. The fees collected are important funds to help sustain payments of related insurances, utility bills and ancillary bills, the mailing of the news bulletin and various activities. Please help support our Historical Society and use the attached Membership Form in this bulletin. Our Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt charitable organization, we gladly except all donations and all donations are tax deductible.

Thank you.

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### VOLUNTEER...

We welcome all volunteer help. If you have a special talent, skill or trade, please let us know how you would like to volunteer or what your area of interest is. Please contact [sutton1704@gmail.com](mailto:sutton1704@gmail.com).

Thank you.

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**SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP FORM  
Annual Membership Fee is due February 2018**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

\$15.00 Individual Fee: \_\_\_\_\_

\$25.00 Family Fee (including children under 18): \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:

Sutton Historical Society Inc.

4 Uxbridge Road

Sutton, MA 01590

The Sutton Historical Society is a nonprofit corporation; all donations are tax deductible

**SPECIAL ORDERS**

\_\_\_ Historical Society Stoneware Mug, \$20 plus \$5 S&H

\_\_\_ 1715 Original Sutton Map (17" x 22"), \$10 plus \$7 mailing tube & postage

\_\_\_ 1795 Sutton Map (18" x 22"), \$20 plus \$7 mailing tube & postage

\_\_\_ 1850 Sutton Houses 1700 - 1850 Map (16" X 22"), \$10 plus \$7 mailing tube & postage

\_\_\_ 1870 Sutton Map (17" x 22"), \$10 plus \$7 mailing tube & postage

\_\_\_ Original 30 Sutton Lots superimposed on current town map (11" X 23"),  
\$20 plus \$7 mailing tube & postage

\_\_\_ Original Sutton Land Owners by Name and Location (13" X 22"),  
\$10 plus \$7 mailing tube & postage

\_\_\_ Volume I, Town History 1704 to 1876, \$90 plus \$7 S&H

\_\_\_ Volume II, Town History 1876 to 1950, \$20 plus \$7 S&H

Mail payment to:

Sutton Historical Society Inc.

4 Uxbridge Road

Sutton, MA 01590

Note: Maps can be purchased at Sutton Public Library and history volumes at Town Clerk's Office



SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 4 UXBRIDGE ROAD  
 SUTTON, MA 01590

2018 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 6	7:00PM	Special Presentation Keith Downer, "The Real Boston Massacre"	First Congregational Church
April 3	7:00PM	General Meeting	First Congregational Church
May 1	7:00PM	Special Presentation Arthur L. Martin, Author of the novel "Summer of 1840, on the Shores of Singletary"	First Congregational Church
June 15	6:30PM	Annual Cookout/Pot Luck Supper	Manchaug Baptist Church 439 Putnam Hill Rd
August 10	6:30PM	Annual Pot Luck Supper	Eight Lots School House
Sept 11	7:00PM	General Meeting	First Congregational Church
Sept 22	9:00 AM	Town-Wide Yard Sale	Blacksmith Shop
October 2	7:00PM	Annual Meeting	First Congregational Church
November 6	7:00PM	Special Presentation Christine Watkins "The Centennial Anniversary of World War 1, Local Soldiers who fought in the Great War"	First Congregational Church
December 5	6:30PM	Annual Christmas Pot Luck Supper and a review of 2018	First Congregational Church

Anyone interested in any of these events is welcome to join us. Dates and times may be subject to change. Upcoming meetings/events are listed in *The Millbury-Sutton Chronicle*, *The Uxbridge Times*, *Towns* section of the *Worcester Telegram*, our Facebook page - Sutton Historical Society Inc. and our website [www.SuttonHistoricalSocietyInc.org](http://www.SuttonHistoricalSocietyInc.org).