

Gloucester Heritage Society

NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY HARRY ANDERSON, GHS PRESIDENT

OUR MISSION

The **Gloucester Heritage Society** identifies, acquires, holds, arranges, restores, maintains, and preserves for posterity buildings, tracts of land, and objects of historical, educational, architectural, cultural, and other similar interests of outstanding value within the Town of Gloucester, Rhode Island.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bd. of Directors Mtg. Sept. 10
Job Armstrong Store 7 p.m.

Heritage Day Sept. 15
Job Armstrong Store 9-3 p.m.

General Meeting Sept. 17
Job Armstrong Store 7 p.m.

Bd. of Directors Mtg. Oct. 1
Job Armstrong Store 7 p.m.

General Meeting Oct. 15
Job Armstrong Store 7 p.m.

Bd. Of Directors Mtg. Nov. 5

Peddlers' Faire Nov. 17
(tentative)

Annual Meeting Nov. 19
Job Armstrong Store 7 p.m.
Election of Officers for 2008

In my mail a few days following the Dorr March was a card with a short message that thanked the GHS for bringing back to Gloucester a joyous sense of community, if only for a day. How very, very much I appreciate that card! If the writer be representative of the majority of folks who came to events June 23, then I deem the Dorr March a success.

Although ostensibly the affair was to raise money for the creation of the Dorr Museum, my unspoken goals were twofold; to generate an esprit de corps among GHS members; and to raise in the consciousness of all sectors of the town the fact that the Pettingell/Mason House is a treasure for us all that, even though its interior awaits renovation, already is attracting wide attention.

Yes, the town pulled together for this one day. Consider this: the Town Council unanimously gave the GHS a



Pettingell/Mason House

grant to cover expenses; the Chepachet firemen shopped for the food and fixings and flipped those dogs and burgers; the local militia hosted other militia units from around the state; the Freewill Baptist Church opened its lovely meeting house and served up chowder & clam cakes and fresh strawberry shortcake; the police department provided escort for the marching militia and controlled traffic; local businesses advertised in the souvenir booklet, provided ice, and pro bono printed tickets and programs; the media was everywhere.

Individuals peeled potatoes, put up a covering for the chowder fest, baked short cakes, portrayed Thomas Dorr, lectured in the Meeting House, photographed every facet of the day's events, oversaw donations, and conducted tours of the future home of the Dorr Museum.

Phew! That adds up to a lot of work by a lot of people (and I thank them all). As I walked the streets of Chepachet that day, checking up on how things were going, I was smiling because everywhere there was an air of community.

What wonders can be accomplished when a mood of unity sweeps over us! I was also smiling because of the irony of the day: we were uniting because we were celebrating the anniversary of a rebellion.

ARMSTRONG STORE GETS “ DRY BASEMENT ”

BY DR. FRANK A. BUCCI

A pesky water problem, which plagued the home of the Gloucester Heritage Society for a number of years, has been solved. The expertise and generosity of the Al Donti & Son Plumbing and Heating Company of Chepachet turned the wet into dry. Al Donti is a good friend and benefactor of the GHS and was happy to help solve the problem.



A powerful Zoehler sump pump and the necessary related piping were ordered. The decision to choose the Zoehler was influenced by the fact that both Donti and honorary Town Historian, Edna Kent, have such pumps and reported excellent service from them for many years. The cost for the pump and the pipes was \$200.

While that was good news; it got even better! The men took the old pump out of the muck, cleaned it, attached new piping, and got it running again! Thus, there was no need to install the Zoehler.

We need to insulate the holes around the pipes with builder's insulation and bury the pipe connection at the store grounds/street area. The charge for the considerable labor necessary for the job and the new pipes is in excess of \$300 **which Mr. Donti has provided the GHS free of charge!**

The Gloucester Heritage Society thanks Mr. Donti for his generous and continued support.

TREASURER'S REPORT

BY LAUREN E. ANDREWS



The Dorr March was conceived as a fundraising tool in our continued efforts to raise money to restore the Pettingell/Mason House to its circa 1752 origins. With two years of hard work behind us, the occasion was appropriate to thank our contributors and our volunteer support staff for their generosity, both in donations and in time. The confidence of our supporters translates into a bottom line to date of approximately \$500,000 received in gifts and pledges.

Turning to our other challenge, the construction phase, structural and exterior work are regarded as done, while interior work remains to begin. Funding of the interior portion is partially completed. The finished structure will contain a caretaker's apartment, and a museum commemorating the Dorr Rebellion and Thomas Dorr's ultimate goal of universal suffrage.

Much of our available funding today consists of pledges, and also funds requiring matched funding. An example of a pledge is a \$100,000 grant from the

Rhode Island Department of Transportation and funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The grant is part of a much larger piece of legislation and is subject to a ratification vote by Congress. The legislation has already survived on House and Senate vote each. In addition, the DOT grant, with its matching capability, would enable us to draw the remaining balance of \$44,000 from an earlier grant in the original amount of \$200,000 provided by the Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission. Finally, there is \$50,000 on hand from the Champlin Foundation. Based on current construction cost estimates combined with our current financial situation, we will need to raise \$50,000 to \$100,000 to complete the job.

The Dorr March was possible, financially, thanks to the support from the Gloucester Town Council, the Chepachet Fire Company, the Chepachet Meetinghouse, and the numerous contributions received from visitors on the day of the Dorr March.

**Lauren Andrews
Treasurer**



DORR MARCH SNIPPETS



- Susan Dorr, Philip Dorr, and other descendants of Thomas W. took in the events.
- Audrey Robinson drove from Wilson, N.H. to donate to the GHS an original page of the Republican Herald, dated December 7, 1844. It features an article about Thomas Dorr.
- Ann Lowell, Caroline Farnum, and Pauline Anderson walked two miles behind militia men down Tourtellot Hill Road to Acotes Field. They were the only walkers. Their spunk raised nearly \$1,000.
- Chief Hainsworth of the Gloucester Police personally escorted the militia to ensure their safety. Bob Duphane, chief of the Chepachet Fire Department, shopped for the dogs and burgers and fixings that his men served up in the fire station, and Alan Whitford, head of the Highway Department, had his crew place trash barrels along Main Street.
- GHS volunteers met 15 times to plan the Dorr March. Attendance averaged 12. It's a recorded fact that 1,559 hours went into the planning of the event.
- Bob Billington, head of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, and Lorraine Provencher, head of Footsteps in History, counseled the GHS throughout the planning. For gratis, they designed posters and printed them, and they did press releases.
- Astrid Stott, Pauline and Harry Anderson, Clifford and Marilyn Brown, and Paul Anderton picked 80 pounds of strawberries at Dame Farm that went into the luscious strawberry shortcakes that topped off the chowder/clam cakes served up at Freewill Baptist Church.
- Mark Rechter peeled the spuds for that chowder.

SOMETHING TO PONDER

THE DORR MARCH RAISED ABOUT \$7,000. THE ESTIMATED COST TO CONVERT THE INTERIOR OF THE PETTINGELL/MASON HOUSE INTO A MUSEUM IS \$350,000.

SIMPLE ARITHMETIC SHOWS THAT, AT THIS PACE OF FUNDRAISING, 19 MORE DORR MARCHES ARE NEEDED, 29,545 MORE HOURS ARE NEEDED TO REACH THAT GOAL.

BULLETIN BOARD



Ideas, suggestions for anything that may help the GHS to please you and to attain its goals are welcome and needed. Lines of communication are easily accessible. **By mail:** Gloucester Heritage Society, P.O. Box 269, Chepachet, RI 02814 **By e-mail:** info@gloucesterheritagesociety.org **By phone:** 401-934-0511.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT SALUTE TO: JOHN DOUCETTE



Congratulations, John Doucette! You are chosen to be in this issue's Volunteer Spotlight.

John, a veteran member of the GHS, has given a huge bundle of his time to help the Society get done a host of chores. Officially, his title is Chair of the Buildings & Grounds Committee, and he sits on the Board of Directors. A civil engineer, he does not simply sit. Not John. He painted the eaves of the Evans Schoolhouse and located the site for Mrs. Ryan's outhouse that stands smartly restored behind the schoolhouse.

Taking on the project of restoring the Pettingell/Mason House is without question the most ambitious undertaking to date of the GHS. Were it not for John, this project probably would be stalled. Right from the start, he took seriously his appointment as Clerk of the Works. In quick order, he drew schematics of the building, led the GHS in selecting an architectural firm and an expert preservationist, and helped to prepare a grant proposal that eventually brought in \$200,000 from the Rhode Island Historical, Preservation, and Heritage Commission.

With one eye on saving the GHS a lot of money and the other eye on discovering the secrets of the old house (circa 1764), he toiled for many hours in demolishing the worthless stuff that, over the years, had been nailed onto walls and floors. All the while, from demolition to cleanup, he showed an extraordinary respect for the original fabric.

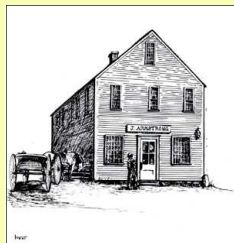
Most recently, John has negotiated with the Acotes Cemetery Association to fix the boundaries of the Pettingell/Mason House's yard so that DOT can plan its restoration of the yard (financed by a grant of \$100,000). He has

also briefed a group of Pona-ganset High School students on the restoration of the house. In April, at the 2007 annual RIHPHC Conference in Pawtucket, he sat on a panel that discussed accomplishments made possible by State Preservation grants.

On top of that, John has taken on from Ed Grasso the job of gathering artisans for the August Heritage Day event.

Thank you, John Doucette. You are an exemplar of volunteerism at its best, without which nonprofits like the GHS could not stay viable.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
WWW.GLOCESTERHERITAGESOCIETY.ORG



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**A 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation incorporated in 1967
to preserve and maintain town historical and aesthetic
values and objects.**

**T H A N K Y O U F O R Y O U R S U P P O R T O F T H E D O R R
M A R C H !**

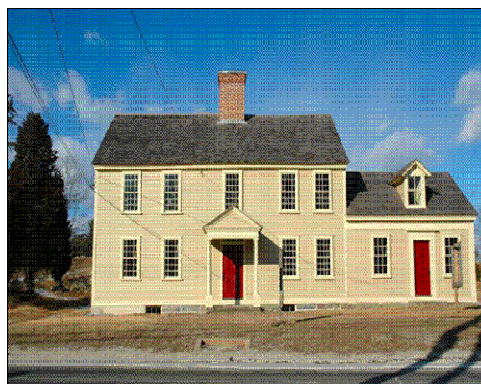
LOOK WHAT YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT HAS DONE FOR THE PETTINGELL/MASON HOUSE!

BEFORE



THEN - DR. REUBEN MASON HOUSE

AFTER



NOW - PETTINGELL/MASON HOUSE

**1111 PUTNAM PIKE
CHEPACHET, RHODE ISLAND**