

THE

NEEDHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INC.
1915

NEEDHAM GAZETTE

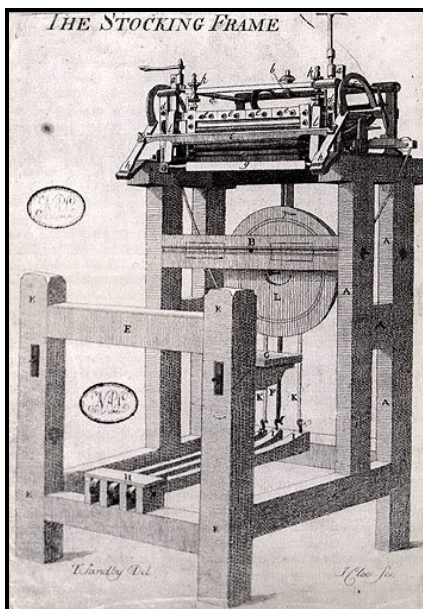
~~~~ With the Latest Occurrences and Advices, Both Foreign and Domestick ~~~~

Member: Needham Business Association, Needham Community Council, Metrowest Regional Library Network

Our Website: [www.needhamhistory.org](http://www.needhamhistory.org)

*"Historically speaking"*

**IN NEEDHAM, SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE!**



## Knitters in Needham

by Chaim Rosenberg, *Ye Olde Guest Columnist*

Jedediah Strutt was one of the pioneers of the English industrial revolution. Born near Alfreton in Derbyshire, England, he patented in 1759 an ingenious machine to replace knitting by hand. A decade later, Strutt formed a partnership with Sir Richard Arkwright to build a water-powered spinning mill to meet the growing demand by the Midland knitters for cotton yarn. One of the apprentices at the mill was the young Samuel Slater from nearby Belper. In 1789, Slater left England for America. He settled in Pawtucket, Rhode Island where, with the financial support of Moses Brown, he established a cotton-spinning mill based on the machines invented by Richard Arkwright.

The next great leap forward in America's path to industrialization was the Boston Manufacturing Company, established in Waltham in 1814 by Francis Cabot Lowell. Here raw cotton was spun into thread and woven by power looms into cloth, all under one roof. The Charles River, however, proved too small a source of power for the expanding American textile industry. After Francis Cabot Lowell died in 1817, his associates moved north to the powerful Merrimack River to establish Lowell, America's first industrial city, in his honor. Textile production boomed and the Lowell System became the model for the nineteenth-century American factory.

Starting around 1830, in Needham, another chapter in the American clothing industry was evolving. Needham Heights (then known as Highlandville) attracted English knitters from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. John Turner was one of the first to arrive and set the example for a number of his countrymen by manufacturing cotton and woolen socks, gloves, underwear, sweaters and jackets, using the knitting machines he brought with him from England. The most successful of the English knitters was William Carter, born in Alfreton, who arrived in America with ten shillings in his pocket. Carter's steam-powered Mill #1 was built on Highland Avenue and Mill #2 at Rosemary Lake. At its peak, the Carter Company owned seven mills, producing 40 million garments a year. William Moseley built his knitting mill across the street from Carter's Mill #1. Joseph and John Thorpe's mill was on High Street, William Gorse's on Hunnewell Street, and George Wye's on Dedham Avenue. By 1890, Needham had thirty-two knitting companies, large and small, employing over six hundred workers. The knitting mill owners were prominent men in Needham. William Henry Carter, son of the

founder, served in the 64th and 65th United States Congresses. He chose not to run for a third term but instead returned to Needham to take command of Carter's after his father died in 1918.

A news headline announced in 1909 that "New England excels Old England" in the production of knitted goods. But storm clouds were gathering to threaten the knitting industry of Needham. William Carter campaigned for higher tariffs to keep out cheaper knitted goods coming from low-wage Europe. Imports, warned Carter, would destroy American industries "and thousands upon thousands of people will be thrown out of employment." To reduce costs, Carter's and others moved production to the South, and by 1950 the century-long manufacture of knitwear in Needham had come to an end. Carter's Inc. is the nation's largest manufacturer of children's clothing, and is now headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia.



*Knitting looms at the George Wye Company, 1910.*

The legacy of Needham's once proud knitting industry can be found on Alfreton Road, where William Carter built his home. William, John, Frank, Horace and Roscoe Streets, near where Central Avenue meets Webster Street, were named for William Carter's sons. Close by is the Cricket Field, donated to the town by Carter and Gorse, where the knitters once played their English games.

The Needham Cemetery, off Nehoiden Street, holds the Carter family burial plot. Thorpe Road, Thorpe Park and Moseley Avenue in Needham carry the names of knitting mill owners. The William Gorse Mill at 31 Thorpe Road has been converting into artists' studios. The Needham Historical Society has in storage a number of the knitting machines that once hummed with activity in our town.



### **WHERE'S Ye O.E.??**

Many thanks to our **Ye Olde Guest Columnists** for the Summer – Chaim Rosenberg in June, and Polly Attridge in July. They have taken over YeOE duties while the actual YeOE is traveling in Scotland and Ireland – *on his honeymoon!* Our most heartfelt congratulations to YeOE and his new bride, and all best wishes for their happiness.

### **PARKING CHANGES – PLEASE NOTE!**

**Summer:** Construction at the Newman School begins on June 20, and will continue until the first week of September. During the summer, access to the parking lot will be restricted. We will be open throughout the summer, with the exception of June 20 – July 4, and **all** parking for the Society is in that new parking strip along the driveway near the garden.

**School Year:** Newman School will reopen in September, but all classes will be held in the modulars that are being set up in the parking lot. The parking strip will be for Historical Society parking **ONLY** during the day, though parking for events may be available in the remainder of the lots during evenings and weekends.

### **CLOSED in JUNE**

We will be closed from June 20 to July 4, and reopen on July 5 for the remainder of the summer. We will not have access to the building, so it might take time for messages etc. to be answered.



**Many Thanks to our Corporate Sponsors!**

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~ Needham Anniversary Factoid ~

Needham was originally a part of the Dedham Grant of 1636, breaking off to become a separate town in 1711. Needham was the third town to separate, following Medfield (1651) and Wrentham (1673). Overall, thirteen current towns were once part of the Dedham Grant ~ Dedham, Needham, Wellesley, Dover, Westwood, Norwood, Medfield, Walpole, Natick, Norfolk, Franklin, Bellingham, Wrentham ~ in no particular order.



**Needham Historical Society  
2011 Annual Meeting**

The Needham Historical Society's 96th Annual Meeting took place on May 12 at the Sheraton Needham Hotel. 65 Members and guests attended, and the guest speaker was Dr. Daniel Breen of Newbury College, who spoke about "The Scandalous History of the Mass. 29th Regiment."

**Report of the Nominating Committee**  
*by Susan Welby, Committee Chair*

The following slate of Officers and Directors was elected at the Annual meeting.

**Officers, 2011 – 2012**

Mark Gluesing, President  
Susan Welby, Vice-President  
David Drake, Treasurer  
Marcy Busch, Secretary  
Maurice P. (Moe) Handel, Immediate Past Pres.  
Pauline M. (Polly) Attridge, Archivist (2011-2013)

**Directors, 2011 – 2014**

Connie Barr Maryruth Perras  
Carol J. Boulris Sandy Smith  
Jane Howard Joan Wasserman  
Michael Nathanson

**Directors, 2010 – 2013**

Rick Davis Greg Petrini  
Claire Fusaro Chaim M. Rosenberg  
Michael Niden Stephen Theall

**Directors, 2009 – 2012**

Susan Duncan Gina cClellan  
Robert Heald Sarah Anne (Sally) Toran  
Deborah Jacob Alison Borrelli

**Trustees**

John H. Cogswell (2010-2013)  
Mark Whalen (2011-2014)  
Thomas Green (2009-2012)



**Report of the President**  
*Mark Gluesing*

I want to thank all of you for your continued commitment to the Needham Historical Society. Your longstanding support is a sign of the strength of the Society.

Needham's Tercentennial year has been a busy one for the Society and its members. Many of our members and Board members are very active on the Needham 300 Committee. Thanks to their efforts Needham's 300th birthday has been a great celebration. We opened two new exhibits in

celebration of the tercentennial. The first, **Needham Dresses Up**, is a display of some of the dresses, shoes, hats, and other clothing and accessories from our collection. The other exhibit consists of photographs of **Needham Center and Needham Heights**, along with photos of the creation of Memorial Park. I want to thank Claire Fusaro, Deb Jacob, Gina McClellan, Sally Toran, Alison Borelli, and Susan Bedell-Healy for their work on the exhibits.

Our annual **Pansy Festival** was held in conjunction with Needham 300's "Pansy in Every Pot" event. The lack of much spring weather did not dampen the town's enthusiasm for this annual event, which was enhanced by the tercentennial celebration of the Pansy. Thanks to event chair Gina McClellan and the Events Committee for their hard work, and to Mindy Pasco-Anderson for donating her creative talents at the Pansy Festival.

We also held a successful new fundraising event in the fall, **Needham's Walk Through History**. Historic houses and sites were researched and organized into several routes. Tents were set up at locations with several related sites and docents were on site to talk about the history and answer questions. Executive Director Gloria Greis, and Archivist Polly Attridge, did extensive research to help select interesting sites and to write their various histories. It was a very well organized and informative event and we look forward to repeating it this year. Special thanks go to Michael Nathanson who conceived the event and chaired the event committee. Thanks also to Susan Welby, Deb Jacob, Sally Toran, and Moe Handel for their hard work. I can't say enough about the terrific work done by Gloria Greis in support of this event. The quality of the information and photographs and accompanying signage and literature were all thanks to her.

In addition to her duties on our behalf, and being the go to resource for tercentennial history information, Gloria also worked with the Needham School Department to develop a new educational program at the Little Red Schoolhouse for fifth grade students. This is the first year of the program, "**1775 Town Meeting**", and it has been a successful addition to our educational programs.

I want to express my gratitude to the **Board of Directors** for their continued support and hard work on behalf of the Society. New events and exhibits are not possible without the commitment of time and energy of the Board. As you can see from what we have done this past year, that support is strong. And please welcome our newest Board member, **Joan Wasserman**. She has been working with the events committee for a while now and I look forward to having her on the Board of Directors.

I want to specifically recognize **Treasurer David Drake**, **Archivist Polly Attridge**, our endowment fund manager **Molly Drake**, newsletter editor **Bob Hall**, and holiday decorations coordinator **Sally Dempsey**, for their special contributions and hard work this year.

And finally, thanks to our membership and corporate sponsors for your continued support. The Needham Historical Society operations are funded entirely by donations and receives no financial contribution from the Town of Needham. Our success is dependent on the generosity of our supporters.

Please enjoy the remaining Needham 300 celebration and events in the coming months. I look forward to seeing you.



### Report of the Treasurer *David Drake*

**The Treasurer reports that for FY 2010, annual income totaled \$84,106.** Income was derived from membership dues, the Annual Fund Drive, fundraising events, rent for use of the facility, general contributions, sponsorship donations, gift and book sales, grants, and a portion of the annual income from the endowment fund.

**Annual expenses for FY 2010 totaled \$82,889.** Primary expenses were for administration, member-related activities, utilities, maintenance and insurance of the facility at 1147 Central Avenue, and the salary of the Executive Director.



## Report of the Executive Director

*Gloria Greis*

When I reported to you in the last couple of years, we were going through a quiet stretch. After all of the activity of the move to the Mills House and getting set up and the Schoolhouse day, we had a couple of years of consolidation, foundation building, and general housekeeping. Calm activities.

Not this year. This year has been busy, busy, busy. And that's good, too. You may have noticed, but 2011 is Needham's tercentennial year. The Tercentennial Planning Committee has been working for three years now to produce the various events that have occurred since November, and that are coming up later on – the opening ceremonies at Memorial Park, the 300 Laps, Dancing with the Stars, the Battle for Needham, Needham Night at the Pops, and many, many others. I am happy to say that we have had a part in nearly all of these (OK, not Dancing with the Stars) – planning some, and providing images or information for others.

As Mark mentioned, we have our own tercentennial projects – notably three new exhibits at the Mills House. Our photo exhibit – **Needham Center ~ Needham Heights** – historic photos of the two parts of town, joined in the center by Memorial Park. Our costume exhibit – **Needham Dresses Up**, with some of the treasures from our extensive historic clothing collection. And (opening soon) – an exhibit on **Needham and the Civil War**, in commemoration not only of the town's tercentennial, but also of the sesquicentennial of the start of the Civil War, 150 years ago last month.

But what has kept us busiest, and happiest, has been the large number of community organizations that have added a note of Needham History to their own activities. It seems that everyone is making an effort to mark the anniversary. To name only a few, we have worked this year with – the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the Garden Clubs, Olin College, the Needham Public Library, Green Needham, the Thorpe Gorse Studios, the Town Administration, the Exchange Club, the Needham Art Association, North Hill – the list goes on, and we look forward to more. This is what we do best, and what we want to do always.

Finally, Annual Town Meeting concluded last night, repeating a community ritual of self-government that has now taken place in Needham, uninterrupted, for 300 years. We can see this not only as an historical artifact, but as a heritage that has been passed on to us, and that we will pass on to future Needhamites.

As I told you last year, Suzanne Wilcox, Principal of the Eliot School, assembled a group that included the fifth grade teachers and me to design a new program for the fifth grades that addressed the social studies curricula in Colonial history and in Civics. What we came up with was **Town Meeting in 1775**.

From the real Needham warrant of March 1775 we extracted two questions for debate – whether or not the community's pigs should be penned up or be allowed to run free in the streets; and whether the town should vote to form a Committee of Correspondence – in other words, become a part of the local network of propagandists and spies that acted as the eyes and ears of the Sons of Liberty. In preparation, the kids were taught about the function, structure and procedures of Town Meeting. They learned that they all - even the girls - had to be men for the occasion if they expected to vote. And they had to research the pros and cons of the two questions in order to be able to speak in the Town Meeting debate. At the end, a Town Meeting was assembled at the Historical Society's Schoolhouse, and the members tried to persuade their fellow townfolk.

We made a very brief movie of the pigs debate, and the Moderator was gracious enough to let us show the clip at Town Meeting on its first night. It was immediately clear that the kids had certain parts of the routine, like seconding motions, down pat. There were more high-fives and cheers than usually occur in TM, and we didn't admonish them for referring to fellow members by name. But it is clear that they were emotionally invested in their characters, and in their role in debate. And that is what we wanted to happen - because in 15 or 20 years, we want to see them there for real.



## The REVERES ARE COMING!

The rather unremarkable building at 270 Rosemary Street, now an apartment dwelling, was once the most important building in Needham. And it was not always at this location.

The building, once known as Revere Hall or Nehoiden Hall was originally built at the corner of Nehoiden Street and Central Avenue, in the heart of the old Town Center. It was built in 1844 by George Revere, a grandson of Paul, for his shoe shop and general store. The large public hall on the second floor was used for town meeting, balls and banquets, the Civil War recruiting station, and “all social functions too large for the ordinary dwelling” (as one resident noted in 1857).

The Hall fell into disuse after 1870 when town meeting functions moved to West Needham (now Wellesley). In 1906, William Carter bought the building and moved it to its current location on Rosemary Street, where he refurbished it into dwellings for workers at his Mill #2 across from the Lake. After Mill #2 was sold, the house was converted into apartments, as it currently remains.

Although the Hall was moved, the Revere family continued living in the neighborhood for several more generations. Those of you who have lived here for a long time may know the “Fire at Dwight School” story: a descendant, named Paul after his revered (*sorry!*) ancestor, lived in the house next door to the old Dwight School on Central Ave., around the 1960s. One night, he saw the flickering of fire at the school and called the Fire Dept. When asked his name, he replied, “Paul Revere,” to which the dispatcher angrily replied, “If you’re Paul Revere, then I’m George Washington!” and slammed down the phone. Fortunately, Paul did manage to convince the dispatcher that the call was not a prank, and the department responded in good time to put out the fire.



*Revere Hall (left), next to the First Parish Church*

*on Nehoiden Street, c. 1870*

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## SUMMER NOTES

### Parking:

All parking for the Historical Society this summer will be limited to the **new parking strip** along the driveway, near the garden. This is necessary to accommodate the construction at Newman, starting on June 20.

### Closed:

The Society will be closed from **June 20 through July 4**, reopening on July 5th. We will have limited access to messages, but will get back to you after July 5th.