

Williamstown Historical Museum

Newsletter

Williamstown, Massachusetts

Spring 2017

Moving Ahead!

By Sarah Currie

As we progress toward the move of our exhibits and offices (with Connors Brothers' help) later this month, we are working diligently to prepare the South Center School for our arrival. Our goal is to transform the school into a history center that town residents can be proud of. The former "Cubs" room of the Williamstown Cooperative Nursery School at Little Red has been transformed into an organized archive with an energy efficient climate control system that ensures the safety of the collection. The "Bears" room has been renovated to fit our re-configured orientation exhibit.

The museum's research facilities and collection will be ready for use in mid-April, while our permanent and temporary exhibits will take more time to curate and assemble. We are eager to show you around our new headquarters and encourage you to visit after April 15, or call to set up an appointment if there is a pressing need. We look forward to celebrating the opening of our temporary and permanent exhibit spaces with a community-wide celebration this summer and hope you will join us. Details will follow in future communications from the WHM.

As the new Williamstown Historical Museum prepares to open its doors, it is anticipated that weekends will be desirable times for visitors to experience Williamstown's history through our exhibits. We aim to be open on weekends throughout the summer and hope you will help us by volunteering for a regular or intermittent one or two hour docent shift. Our best candidates are not necessarily academics versed in Williamstown's history, but residents who want to learn more about Williamstown and contribute to an organization with a bright future.

Contact me by email at to learn more about how you can help the WHM! I look forward to hearing from you soon. sarah@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org.



The Gale Hose Cart

By Erryn Leinbaugh and The Gale Hose Co.

John Benjamin Gale's Hose Cart No. 2 was "discovered" during a Williamstown Historical Museum visit to a portion of Williamstown's former Mount Hope Farm, which is now a private residence on Green River Road, in 2009. That year, Maurice Filler opened a few out-buildings on his property to Williamstown Historical Museum researchers, who found therein a hand-fashioned, high-wheeled firefighting hose cart. On their initial visit, while photographing the cart and looking for some type of identification, they noted a familiar name on the rear of the apparatus: "JB Gale No. 2."

Williamstown's Gale Hose Company, an early iteration of what is now the Williamstown Fire District, was named in honor of John Benjamin Gale, Williams College Class of 1842, so the name was familiar to researchers as they began learning about the hose cart and investigating its role in the origins of the Gale Hose Company. Gale, it was discovered, donated two hose carts and 1,000 feet of hose to the volunteer fire-fighting company formed by a special Williamstown town meeting in 1894 and organized in 1895; out of gratitude for his donation, the Company was named after him in 1897.

The history of Gale's donation and the founding of the Gale Hose Company are well-documented in local histories (see Brooks et al, *Williamstown: The First 250 Years*, pages 250-252), and the hose cart likely performed substantial service to the town, as over fifty major fires occurred in town in the first fifty years of the Company's existence. Interestingly, it also appears to have represented the town in amicable competitions with nearby hose companies, including in places such as Turners Falls, MA, and Greenwich, NY. Since that time, the Williamstown



Gale Hose Cart Photo, courtesy of Mike Miller

Gale Hose: continued on page 2

Gale Hose: Continued

Fire District, organized in 1912, has gradually come to assume responsibility for most fire protection in town (the Forest Warden maintains jurisdiction over outdoor fires), and the Gale Hose Company has assumed the role of a fraternal organization of Williamstown fire-fighters, with a mission including service to current and former fire-fighters, their fam-



Firemen train with No. 2

ilies, and the community at large.

Research suggests the JB Gale No. 2 likely was donated to Mount Hope Farm after the early Gale Hose Company and Williamstown Fire District turned to motorized vehicles beginning in 1916. By the Roaring Twenties, Mount Hope had in place a private fire hydrant loop, and the hose cart was likely a welcome addition in case of fire. Evidently, the cart was used rarely, if ever, in service at Mount Hope, as available records do not document large fires in the vicinity of Mount Hope since it was built in 1928.



Gale Hose No. 2 in the Collections Room at the South Center School

Mr. Filler gave JB Gale No. 2 to the Gale Hose Company in 2013, and several years of fundraising and the generosity of Williamstown residents through a Community Preservation Act grant led to the conservation of the Hose Cart. It is now on display at the Williamstown Historical Museum.

Williamstown Theatre Festival Scrapbooks Coming to WHM!

The WHM will receive the generous donation of historic scrapbooks, programs and other archives and ephemera from the Williamstown Theatre Festival this summer. The scrapbooks date from the earliest days of the theatre festival, founded in 1954. Included are news clippings related to the productions and WTF events that occurred throughout summers gone by. The theatre festival is having the scrapbooks digitized and when this process is completed, we will be receiving the artifacts and adding them to our collection.

The Collections Room



**Above: before shelving was installed
Below: panoramic view of installed shelves**



We're getting there!

The Exhibits Room



Above: walls with spray foam before drywall and partial walls were constructed

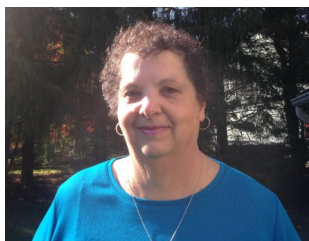
Below: partial walls constructed, exhibit pieces starting to move in



Progress is being made!

President's Remarks

By Kathy Thompson



Kathy Thompson
WHM President

Dear Friends,

We are in an exciting phase of the museum's move to the South Center School building. As you can see from the pictures in this newsletter we have been busy! So far our Collection has been moved to the renovated space, and the Research Room and office will be next, followed by the Permanent Exhibition. We are in the final stages of making our new home a place Williamstown can be proud of.

A capital campaign is well underway. We thank those who have contributed so generously to renovation expenses and look forward to further support from members and friends.

If you are in need of our services during this transition time, send us an email at: info@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org or call us at: 413-458-2160. If you would like to help in any way or have questions about what you could do to make the museum move a smoother process, please contact our director, Sarah Currie, via telephone or email.

The 20 members of our current board of directors are an outstanding group. I am grateful to all of them for their hands-on work and support of every kind.

Three Public Lecture Programs Scheduled for This Spring



Saturday, March 25, 11 a.m. at the Williams Masonic Lodge, 772 Main Street – *The History of the Masons and Eastern Star in Williamstown* with Martha J. Stohlmann, Eric Chenaille and Craig A. Pedercini, organizational representatives.

Saturday, May 20, 10 a.m.

— **noon** at the Clark Art Institute auditorium, - *An Overview of Kalarama Orchards: Geology, Ecology, History and Conservation* with Williams College Professors Ronadh Cox and Hank Art, land owner and conservationist Scott Hoover, and board member Patrick Quinn.



Saturday, June 24, 11 a.m. at Sweetwood of Williamstown, 1611 Cold Spring Road, *Political Divisions in Early Williamstown: Patriots vs. Loyalists (1775) and Federalists vs. Republicans (1800)* with Dustin Griffin, retired NYU English Literature Professor and former member of the museum board. Dusty has curated several popular exhibits for the WHM and his previous lectures on local history have drawn wide acclaim.

Tentative dates for a grand opening celebration at the South Center School building in late June are being explored.

Williamstown Historical Museum

Please contribute to the 2017 Williamstown Historical Museum Capital Campaign!

Your donation supports the renovation of the South Center School, which will house the WHM collections, exhibits and offices, and the research and children's areas in an energy-efficient, climate-controlled and secure facility in South Williamstown. These projects are durable capital investments in the museum's home for the next 50 years.

Your contribution will make an immediate and lasting difference!

JOIN THE 2017 WHM CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Mail to: Williamstown Historical Museum
32 New Ashford Road
Williamstown, MA 01267

Or donate online:

<http://www.williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org>

ENCLOSED is my capital campaign contribution for:

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Current images of the new WHM headquarters at the South Center School at 32 New Ashford Road.