

The Haystack Monument

by Sarah Currie



**Haystack Monument,
c. 1890**

A recent visit to the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) to view its current exhibit, *The Field is the World: Williams, Hawai'i, and Material Histories in the Making*, which includes material on the American Protestant missionary movement, led me to an investigation of the Haystack Monument and its history. I began with Arthur Latham Perry's far-reaching, circuitous, and sometimes incorrect history, *Williamstown and Williams College* (1899), and extended my

research through other resources at the WHM and online. Perry's book is available in the WHM Flynt Research Room and online. If Perry's story is true, it provides enlightening information about the event in the summer of 1806 that is said to have inspired five Williams College students to begin the American Protestant missionary movement.

According to legend, five Williams College students, who had been holding regular prayer meetings, took shelter from a thunder storm in a haystack in July or August of 1806 and focused their prayers on foreign missions. The students in the original meeting were Samuel J. Mills, James Richards, Francis L. Robbins, Harvey Loomis, and Byram Green. The group ultimately concluded that its missionary field would be the world. After their meeting, they inspired others to gain interest in the movement and by 1810 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had been created to spread Christianity across the world. Its full board and missionary work began around 1812-1813. Samuel J. Mills, a leader in the movement, was about 23 when he entered Williams in April 1806 and it is believed that by that time he had already had the idea of creating a foreign mission movement.

According to Perry, in 1854, when the mission movement was well underway, Williams College Presi-

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First Home of Williamstown Historical Museum

by Cynthia Payne

Founded as the House of Local History, the Williamstown Historical Museum began life as a co-occupant with the town public library in the historic Botsford House, at 762 Main Street, now home to museum board member Cynthia Payne and her family. On November 11, 2017, Ms. Payne hosted a tour of the building and gave a presentation on the history of the house and her renovation adventures in changing it from a public institution back into a private home. This article is based on that presentation.

The name of the house comes from its 1940 purchase by E. Herbert Botsford, whose exemplary life is described by Alan Louis in a separate article. The house was originally built in 1815 by Daniel Noble, whose family had owned the property since 1770. Treasurer of Williams College and father of four, Noble oversaw creation of a home in the early Federal style, reflecting details from architect Asher Benjamin and his influential handbooks on design.

Noble died in 1830 at the age of 54, having lived in the house for 15 years. After the death of his widow, Noble's son-in-law sold the house to Judge Joseph White, a Williams College Alumnus, Trustee, and Treasurer. White added Victorian elements to the house—a portico



Botsford House, before 1974

First House continued on page 4

HAY DAY FAIR

August 19, 2018



Come one, come all!



Welcome neighbors!



On your mark, get set...



Go!



John Quinn serving popcorn



Julie Merritt pets a calf.



The silent auction



Pony rides with the Berkshire Jammin' Critters 4-H club pictured below



Big smiles!



Fresh veggies and many other great vendors



Face Painting with the Girl Scouts and bird house building with the Garden Club



Steve Bullock's Antique car

2018 Summer Recap

By Sarah Currie

The summer of 2018 was filled with events at the Williamstown Historical Museum. We thank all who attended the WHM Annual Meeting in June, which was accompanied by an opening of the WHM summer exhibit, *From Trash to Treasure and Recent Acquisitions*. In July, we celebrated the life of Nancy Burstein and honored her memory by naming the Children's Discovery Room for her. The board is extremely grateful to members of the Burstein family for their willingness to participate in this event and for their generous contribution to the WHM. We also appreciate Nancy's many friends who made donations in her memory.



Nancy Burstein's family gathers for a photo during the memorial event.

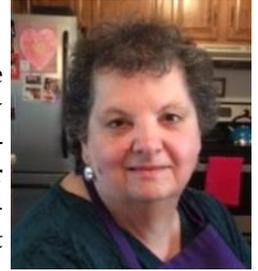
Visitation to the museum has increased significantly since its move to the South Center School. Now located in a historic school building, in a historic district, along a main road, the Museum is a cultural anchor to the town, which benefits from its visible location. When we compare the number of visitors to our old location in the summer of 2016 to those visiting us at our new location, we find that visitation has increased by an average of more than 90 percent for the past two years. We are pleased to see familiar faces of town residents and happily welcome out-of-towners who are just passing through.

We thank the town and Facilities Supervisor Ken McAlpine for renovating the shed on the WHM grounds. The roof was repaired and now the shed can be used for seasonal storage.

In August, Hay Day was a resounding success, bringing together multiple generations for a fun-filled day styled after an old country fair. The petting zoo and games were popular, as were the silent auction, non-profit organization tables, vendor booths and delicious food options. Thank you to all who attended, donated, and participated in the event. The WHM looks forward to another Hay Day Fair in August of 2019 and all are invited to attend!

President's Remarks

Dear Members and Friends,



Kathy Thompson
WHM Board President

What a wonderful turnout we had in August at our first Hay Day event! I am grateful for the never-ending work that our Hay Day Fair chairperson, Patrick Quinn, performed to make sure that the event went off smoothly. We send our sincere thanks to all of the people, organizations, and businesses that participated in the event. We look forward to seeing all of your happy faces at next year's Hay Day event. So many young families attended Hay Day and we are grateful for the interest of our young people, which encourages us to continue to carry out the work of the museum.

I also thank the Town of Williamstown, under the direction of Town Manager Jason Hoch and Department of Public Works Director Tim Kaiser, for their efforts on the grounds of the WHM. The care of our lawn, the restoration of our shed, and numerous maintenance projects certainly made our fairgrounds look inviting.

Please join us for our upcoming fall and winter lectures. This winter, Executive Director Sarah Currie will continue to work with Williams College students to archive our acquisitions.

Thank you for your continued membership and support. Without them we would not be able to offer our local history events.

My Best Regards,

Kathy Thompson



Ken McAlpine and the renovated shed

Williamstown
Historical
Museum

NAME(S) _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL: _____

Please think of the Williamstown Historical Museum for gifts in memory or commemoration or
JOIN now or **RENEW** your **MEMBERSHIP**

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

ENCLOSED is my contribution for:
_____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 _____ Other

To Join or Make a Donation Online:
www.williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org

First House , continued

extending the front door and Palladian window out from the front of the house, marble fireplaces, a cupola on the roof, and large-paned Victorian windows.



Botsford House with additions made by Talcott Banks. Image from 1930s holiday greeting card

After Judge White's death

the house was owned and occupied by Olive Dawes Banks and Talcott Miner Banks, Williams Class of 1890. Their daughter, Sarah Banks, lived in the house with her husband and two children until 1935. A history of the house written by Annette Jenks includes her memories of the farm-like environment with gardens, cows, horses and chickens. She also described the 1911 renovation work of adding the three-story ell on the back of the house, with an apartment on the second and third floors. During the renovation a cannon ball was discovered in a fireplace.



Elizabeth Sanford Botsford, date unknown

After the Banks family departed, the house was sold in 1940 to Frederick Moore who then sold it to E. Herbert Botsford, whose daughter, Elizabeth, had been killed in an automobile accident in 1915. Neither Moore nor Botsford ever lived in the house. Upon purchasing the house, Mr. Botsford donated it

to the town with the stipulation that it be called the Elizabeth Sanford Botsford Memorial Library. The deed contained instructions that the building should house the public library downstairs and a newly-established House of Local History on the second floor. The first President of the local history organization was E. Herbert Botsford.

Adjustments by the town to make the building more suitable for a library and museum included installation of many bookshelves, carpeting, acoustic ceiling tile, fluorescent and track lights, back stairs to the apartment occupied by the building custodian, and the addition of a children's room. The building was used for many years as a library and research center, but by the 1990s the library had run out of space. In 1994 the town approved moving the operations to the building previously owned by the Pine Cobble School, and custody of the Botsford House was transferred to the select board.

During the period from 1994-1998, the residents of Williamstown debated the future of the Botsford House — whether to make it a town center for community activities

or to sell it to a private owner. Review of the original deed led to Botsford's stipulation that if the house were no longer used for the library, it should be returned to the Botsford heirs. If the heirs did not claim the property, it was to be returned to the tax rolls as a private property, a move that was approved by vote of the town residents.



Library circulation desk at the Botsford House with stairway leading to the House of Local History, c. 1998

The Paynes purchased the house as sole bidders in September 1998. Proceeds from the sale went to the Botsford House fund, shared by the town library and the Williamstown Historical Museum (then the House of Local History).

Restoring the building to a private home called for many projects: removing carpeting and crumbling asbestos tile, restoring wood floors, taking out fluorescent lights and exit signs, blowing in insulation, updating wiring, restoring fireplaces, and putting in a custom-designed cherry kitchen. A winter failure of the heating system caused cracking of pipes and Victorian radiators, which were replaced with authentic salvaged ones. Bookcases were distributed throughout the house and family members finally had sufficient space for all their books. A single wall was moved to provide a larger dining room. Light switches were replaced with push buttons. After the Payne children moved out, part of the 1911 addition was reconfigured to serve as two Airbnb suites.

Today the house is a gracious and comfortable home where the Paynes welcome guests and host some community events. Ms. Payne is pleased with the outcome of all the efforts and says, "I am a lucky woman to be able to live in my Dream House."



Botsford House as the Williamstown Public Library

Haystack Monument, continued



Samuel Mills

dent Mark Hopkins, who was curious about the Haystack Prayer Meeting, and who had received a request to create a monument commemorating the event, invited Byram Green to help identify the haystack location. Green recalled that, "the stack of hay stood northerly from the West College, near a maple grove, in a field that was then called Sloan's meadow."

It is believed that the Haystack Monument stands very close to the original location of the event.

The exhibit at WCMA grew out of the rediscovery of a box of artifacts once belonging to the College's Lyceum of Natural History and examines these objects while addressing the challenging and complex history of the college's connection with Hawai'i (one of the locations targeted by foreign missionaries from Williams College) as well as the varied histories of artifact collection and their interpretation. One of the exhibit panels states that the exhibit aims to "draw attention to a past that is unfamiliar to many" and "to encourage further conversations about our histories."



Color Postcard of the Haystack Monument, date unknown

We hope you will visit WCMA to view the exhibit, and keep an eye out for a few postcards, photos, and display cases in the exhibit that are on loan from the WHM collection. *The Field is the World* will be on display at WCMA through December 2018. You are also invited to visit the WHM Flynt Research Room to view other pieces of memorabilia from the collection related to the Haystack Monument that will also be on display until December 29, 2018.



In 1956, during the 150th anniversary of the Haystack Prayer Meeting, commemorative seals were sold to benefit the Haystack Scholarship Fund. The stamps and other artifacts will be on view at the WHM through December 2018.

Visit us this winter!

December through March Hours:

Friday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

We are also available by appointment.

Please call or email if you would like to visit outside of our regular hours.

413.458.2160 or

info@williamsownhistoricalmuseum.org

Docents

The Lifeblood of the WHM

By Sarah Currie

The Williamstown Historical Museum is fortunate to have a strong group of dedicated volunteers who help in many areas, keeping the WHM running and bolstering its role as a vibrant local history resource. Our regular and substitute docents keep our doors open, each spending a two-hour shift per week or month--welcoming visitors, carrying out research, assisting in exhibit research, planning and presentation, and performing useful cataloging and clerical tasks. The breadth of experience in our docent corps runs deep and we are extremely grateful for their service.

We encourage docents to engage in work that is interesting and fulfilling to them, which results in far-ranging projects. One of our new volunteers is carrying out research on the history of mills in town, both to satisfy her personal curiosity and to add to the museum's infor-



Edith Schwartz prepares a large donation of material for cataloging.

mation resources. Another docent with local roots enjoys genealogical research, the results of which will be reported in a future newsletter. Another weekly volunteer assists with cataloging by organizing, recording, and storing items in archivally sound containers. Her work on large collections of material is particularly useful and contrib-

Docents continued on page 6



Ginny Granger and Rita Watson (background) are hard at work.

utes to the healthy maintenance of the collection.

All of our exhibits are created with the assistance of volunteers who help carry out exhibit research, retrieve items from the collection area, and arrange artifacts in the exhibit. We frequently receive online genealogical research requests, which are filled by skilled volunteers,

such as David Primmer, who use materials available at the WHM and online.

While our docents have many reasons for volunteering, they all share a desire to contribute to the community in a hands-on way that also benefits the organization. Susan Schneski, a regular volunteer docent, says she helps because of her love for South Williamstown, her affection for the South Center School building, and her desire to contribute to the building's continued life as the headquarters for the WHM. Patrick Quinn, a monthly volunteer who grew up in Williamstown, says, "It's fun sharing my knowledge of Williamstown with new people who come in."

Our regular and substitute docents include: Mary Fuqua, Ginny Granger, Pat Greenberg, Paul Guillotte, Mary Lovvorn, Mary O'Connor, Cynthia Payne, David Primmer, Patrick Quinn, Susan Schneski, Edith Schwartz, Ginny Sheldon, Kay Sherman, Richard Shotwell, Kathy Thompson, Rita Watson, and Larry Wright. We invite you to join in the fun!

If you are interested in learning more about docent and volunteer opportunities, please contact Executive Director Sarah Currie by phone at 413-458-2160 or by email at sarah@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org.

E. Herbert Botsford

By Alan Louis

"Whereas: E. Herbert Botsford, our fellow citizen, has contributed of his time, his resources, and his life for the betterment and improvement of Williamstown in so far as both the physical properties and cultural opportunities thereof are concerned; and

"Whereas: E. Herbert Botsford, our neighbor, has made contributions legion in number and of the nature as indicated above, all of them having been motivated by the ideal of Service before Self; and

"Whereas E. Herbert Botsford, our friend, has made by his unselfish and public-spirited actions a lasting and real impression for good upon this our fair town;

"Now, therefore, Be it resolved that this resolution be made and tendered to our fellow citizen, our neighbor, and friend, as evidence of our appreciation and in testimony of the lasting good of his altruism and public spirit."

-undated and unsourced testimonial from the WHM Collection

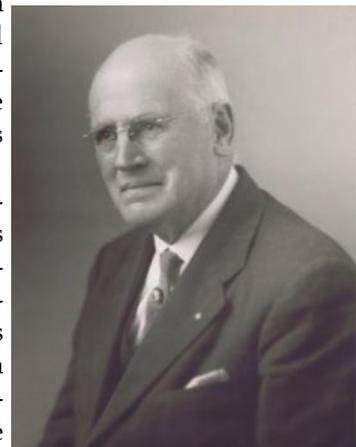
The life of Dr. Eli Herbert Botsford is one fuller than words can do justice to. It begins in Port Byron, New York, on December 18, 1860, with a child born to the Rev. A. P. Botsford, Doctor of Laws, and Mary A. Pardee. In 1877 the Botsford child graduated from Port Jervis high school and immediately entered Williams College with the class of 1882. He stayed to work towards a master's degree, received in 1885, during which time he also served as an assistant in the chemistry department.

After some time at Heidelberg University in Germany, he returned in 1886 as principal of Williamstown high school. He held the position until 1891, after which he returned to Port Jervis to serve as teacher and then principal for two years. Botsford next moved to Hawley, Pennsylvania, where he was again employed as a principal 1893-1896. These travels in education were capped by a four-year period, 1896-1900, during which Botsford continued his administrative role as principal at Burr and Burton Academy, Manchester, Vermont.

In 1900 - his wanderlust finally quelled - Botsford returned to Williamstown to stay, beginning with his founding of the Northside Preparatory School. His Berkshire roots deepened as he became more involved with Williams College, serving as a professor of mathematics (1912-1919), a member of the Williams athletic council (1914-1932), a graduate treasurer (1914-1930), and alumni secretary (1919-1935). In 1931 the college awarded Botsford the honorary degree of doctor of humane letters in recognition of his service.

Dr. Botsford's community involvement was certainly not limited to Williams College. His aforementioned contributions were interspersed with stints of public service, including three terms on the school committee (1929-1947), and his fulfillment of such positions as library trustee (1943-1952), trustee and subsequent vice-president of the Williamstown Savings Bank (1932 on), director of the Northern Berkshire Gas Company (1934 on), treasurer of the First Congregational Church (1886-1930), and cemetery commissioner (1927 on), in which function he gave the town the Memorial Wall (1936) at the entrance of Eastlawn Cemetery in memory of Charles and Elizabeth Sanford.

However impressive his service record, Dr. Botsford's defining legacy is perhaps his contributions, important and everlasting, in cultivating the region's historical spirit. His own written volumes, *Williams College Presidents* (1928), and *Fifty Years at Williams* (1940), spanned the administrations of President Chadbourne through President Garfield. The latter year also marked



Eli Herbert Botsford, c. late 1940s.



Zeta Psi House, c. 1897. This building, located on the west side of North Street, became Botsford's Northside school and is no longer standing. Photo courtesy of Alexander Davidson Collection. College Archives and Special Collections, Williams College.

his historical masterwork: after he acquired the Talcott Miner Banks residence, a stately colonial home on Main Street, Dr. Botsford donated the residence to the community to house a library and "collection of photographs and other valuable records of houses, people, and scenes of Williamstown." This House of Local History, of which Botsford was president every year from its founding until his death, was initially called the Elizabeth Sanford Botsford Memorial Building in memory of his late daughter (1915), and today its mission is preserved and continued by the Williamstown Historical Museum.

Elizabeth's mother and wife of E. Herbert for over 40 years, Angie Emma Sanford Botsford, died in 1926. At the time of his death in 1952, Dr. Botsford left three sisters and his second wife, the former Helen Sanford.

Born in Malone, N.Y., as Helen Collins, she first became involved with Williamstown with her marriage to Murry M. Sanford. After Murry Sanford's death in 1918, Helen Sanford became the owner and operator of Sanford's Studio, continuing to run it for several years. Mrs. Botsford married our dear doctorate, February 23, 1940. During her life she was a strong advocate of the women's suffrage movement, head of the Women's Liberty Loan Drive, and president of the North Adams Women's Club. An avid traveler, she made a trip around the entire world in the 1930s, including time in Russia studying the Soviet experiment. She lived to be 100 years old.

The Williamstown Historical Museum remembers the Botsfords as shining examples of the positive impacts individuals can have on their communities.

- Alan Louis is a sophomore at Williams College and works at the Williamstown Historical Museum during the school year, assisting with research and collections cataloging.

Late Fall and Winter Programs 2018 – 2019

- **Saturday, December 8, 11 a.m. at the Milne Public Library** - Pat Leach, *What Remains: The Elizabeth Botsford Mysteries*
- **Saturday, January 19, 2019, 11 a.m. at Sweetwood of Williamstown** - Dusty Griffin, *Colonel Prentice's Writings*
- **February or March 2019, Dates, Times, and Locations TBD** -
Carol DeMayo, *A History of Mill and Arnold streets* and
Bill Powers, *Behind the Scenes at the Clark Art Institute*

Visit the WHM website to view videos of past programs, courtesy of WilliNet.

www.williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org

Textiles of Williamstown Selections from the Williamstown Historical Museum Collection

On view until December 29, 2018, at the WHM

Visit the WHM to view a selection of textiles from the collection featuring a uniform from a woman who served in the Women's Auxiliary Corps during WWII, an Emancipation Period sampler, wool blankets from Mt. Hope Farm, a sheet made from flax farmed and processed in South Williamstown, and a velvet opera coat that once belonged to a well-known town resident. Most of the pieces in this exhibit were conserved at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center with funding from the Community Preservation Act Fund. The WHM is grateful to the town, the CPC, WACC and its board for their support of this conservation project. The exhibit will be on display in the Flynt Research Room until December 29.



Williamstown Historical Museum

32 New Ashford Road, Williamstown, MA 01267

December - March Hours:
Fridays and Saturdays, 10 - 2
And by appointment



In recognition of Veteran's Day and a significant anniversary in November 2018, WHM board member Paul Guillotte photographed this plaque.

Do you know where in town this plaque can be found and what it memorializes?

You may send your guesses to the museum at

413-458-2160 or info@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org.