

# Williamstown Historical Museum

Williamstown, Massachusetts

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Summer 2021

## Newsletter

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The Dolan-Jenks barn is pictured above in its former (top right) and approximate future locations. Its move to the museum will allow for a number of new opportunities.

### Our Dolan-Jenks Barn Restoration Project

By Kendall McGowan

If you've been down Route 43 recently, you will have noticed that the barn located at 1101 Green River Road has been taken down. But it will not be disappearing from the Williamstown landscape.

The Williamstown Historical Museum has embarked on a special project to preserve the iconic Dolan-Jenks barn, which was generously donated to the museum by Carole and Peter Dolan. Now that it is fully dismantled, the components will be restored and then moved and reassembled behind the WHM at 32 New Ashford Road site of the old South Center School, which houses the museum's exhibits.

The Dolan-Jenks barn is part of a property that once included a working farm with 12 ancillary buildings, in addition to the one that remains. It is estimated that the barn was built in the mid-1800s and was used for storing ice, farm equipment and vehicles, and even served as a staging area for a local traveling carousel. It is a surviving member of an ever-dwindling group of early- and mid-19th century barns that were used to support agriculture, transportation, and daily life in the first century after European settlers came to Williamstown.

The museum has chosen David Babcock of Babcock Brothers Restoration to perform the disassembly, restoration, and reassembly of the barn. David is the son of Richard W. Babcock, a renowned barn preservationist who lived in Hancock, and is an excellent restorer in his own right. His group has carefully taken the barn

*Barn Project continued on page 3*

### Land Acknowledgement

It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are learning, speaking, and gathering on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

## President's Remarks

What a pleasure it is to feel the world opening up from COVID. The Historical Museum is opening up as well, with summer hours to begin July 1, on Wednesday mornings and Sunday afternoons, in addition to Saturdays. This will provide plenty of opportunity to see our extensive new exhibit, "Sliding Baseball Across Williamstown." Bring your family and guests!



Linda Conway

Also covered in this edition of the newsletter is our major contribution to historic preservation — moving the Dolan-Jenks local barn on Green River Road to the property behind the Museum. Read about the disassembly and plans for using the reassembled barn for education and display. We are extremely grateful to major donors who have made this project possible, and will appreciate your help as we raise the balance needed. Watch your mail!

As always, June is traditionally Annual Meeting month. Again this year we have foregone an actual public meeting, per the permission of the Commonwealth, but **our board has been permitted to elect new members and officers.** At our June 15 meeting we elected Michael Goodwin, Kathy George, and Barbara Halligan Fisher as new board members for three-year terms and re-elected Linda Conway for an additional three-year term. Officers, elected for one-year terms, are Linda Conway, President; Dave Westall, Vice President; Paul Boyer, Treasurer; and Susan Schneski, Secretary. Andrus Burr, Joe Bergeron and Paul Dube will not be serving additional terms, and Dante Birch has had to resign from the board. We heartily thank Andrus, Dante, Joe and Paul for their service to the Museum.

Finally, it is with both gratitude and sadness that we will bid farewell to our Executive Director, Sarah Currie at the end of June. After 13 years at the museum, she will begin a new chapter, thankfully also in Williamstown.

As always, we very much appreciate your membership and hope you will encourage friends and neighbors to join the Williamstown Historical Museum. We wish you well for a nearly normal summer season. Our contribution to your summer will be a return of our annual Hay Day on Sunday, August 15. Circle the date on your calendar and bring relatives and friends for some old-fashioned country fun.



## Summer Hours

*As of July 1:*

Wednesday 10 - 12

Saturday 10 - 4 (Current)

Sunday 12 - 4

*Or by appointment: contact 413-438-2160 or  
info@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org*

## Mission and Supporting Statements

The purpose of the Williamstown Historical Museum is to promote interest in the history of the Williamstown area by collecting, cataloging, and preserving items of historical significance, and to increase the public's knowledge of Williamstown's past through educational exhibits, programs, events, research, publications, and any other functions which further this purpose. The Williamstown Historical Museum is committed to collecting and sharing the stories of all of the residents of this area across the centuries.

## The WHM Collection

The museum's collection consists of items dating from early history in the region through the present day, and the collection is always growing. The museum encourages all residents and museum members to share their stories, make suggestions about areas of research and program presentation, and participate in the museum's activities so a broader understanding of the history of Williamstown can be gained and shared. The museum needs your help to ensure that everyone is represented. Please contribute to the diversity of the collection by sharing your story, your thoughts, and artifacts related to the town's history. Thank you for your investment in your town.



*Barn Project, continued from page 1*

apart, salvaging as much as possible, and has transported the materials to their workshop in Lee, Massachusetts, where they will clean and restore each piece. The barn components will then be moved back to Williamstown and rebuilt, with a corresponding public barn raising and other educational events.

The addition of the Dolan-Jenks barn to the museum's collection opens the door to a range of new opportunities. It will host demonstrations of 19th-century construction methods, tool use, joinery, and other traditional skills. Educational programs will also cover the significance of agriculture, farm buildings and local landscapes in Williamstown's history. Furthermore, the extra building will allow for the display of antique farm tools and vehicles that the museum currently doesn't have the room to accept. We look forward to welcoming you into this space in the next year!

To contribute to this project or request more information, please reach out to the Williamstown Historical Museum by e-mail at [info@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org](mailto:info@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org) or by phone at 413-458-2160.



**The addition of the barn to WHM property will allow for larger items, such as this cart, to be added to our collection and displayed.**



**The Dolan-Jenks barn was deconstructed over the course of a few weeks in April and May by Babcock Brothers Restoration, who have since transported it to their workshop in Lee, Massachusetts. Once restored, it will return to Williamstown.**





One of Williamstown's major ties to baseball history is through the first intercollegiate baseball game, played between Williams and Amherst Colleges in 1859. The game was played with handmade balls and rules that resembled cricket. This photo shows the Williams baseball team in the 1880s.

## Baseball in Williamstown

By Larry Moore

We are really excited to have our exhibit "Sliding Baseball Across Williamstown" at the Williamstown Historical Museum, in a town where there is so much baseball history. The history of baseball in the Berkshires goes back to 1791 in Pittsfield when the town wrote a by-law banning the playing of ball games within 80 yards of the newly built town hall. One of the games mentioned was baseball. This turned out to be the first mention of baseball in the United States in a government document. Being a game that has evolved over the centuries, baseball even has some ties to the early Egyptians, so determining exactly where it was invented is not possible.

Here in Williamstown we find some very strong roots with Frank Grant, whose family moved to Spring Street in 1871 from Pittsfield, where he was born. He developed into one of the premier players of the 19th century. He was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006. But Williamstown does not hang its hat only on Grant, because Williams College played in the first intercollegiate baseball game six years before Mr. Grant was born. The game of "Brain and Muscle" was part of a dual match of chess and baseball played in Pittsfield in 1859. Just about 30 years later town resident Bob Pettit, a player of some note, was invited to go on Albert Spalding's baseball goodwill trip around the world, quite a feat in 1889. Pettit was a member of Spalding's Chicago White Stockings prior to the trip, thus the invitation.

Williamstown native and former Minor Leaguer Ryan Cameron, when asked why there were so many baseball players from Berkshire County stated, "It's because of the coach-

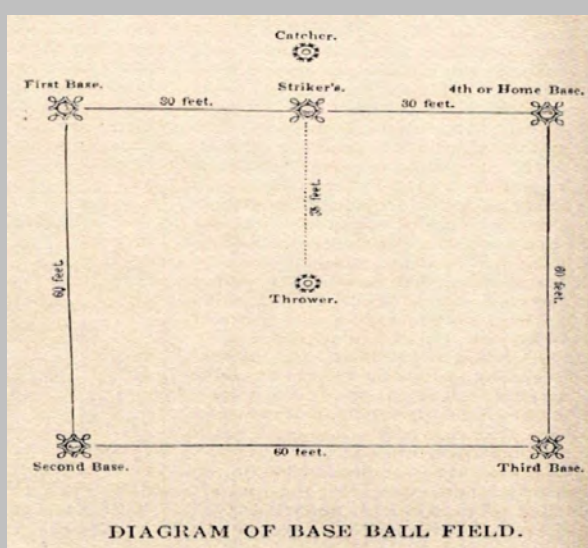
ing we had." That brings us to a couple of Williams College coaches -- Coach Jim "Briggsey" Briggs from the family of Detroit Tiger fame -- brought fame to the college not only after graduating but later as baseball coach. More recently Bob Coakley coached his two sons at Williams. Next up are high school coaches, and I would be remiss not to mention long-time Williamstown High School Coach Ted Sylvester, who coached quite a few players who took their baseball skills to at least the next level. Recently retired Steve Messina is next up for us and he also has quite a few players who took the laurels they won in high school to another level. I am sure with all the years of baseball at Williamstown High School/Mount Greylock Regional High School I have missed many others.

Let's look more closely at those players who took their gift, hard work, and determination to the Major League level. Besides Grant and Pettit in the major leagues, there is also Jonah Bayliss who laid down his hockey stick and picked up a baseball glove, striking out the likes of Frank Thomas during his career. Next up is Jack Mills, who was born here but later went to Pittsfield High School and Williams College. He had a "cup of coffee" with the Major League Cleveland Naps in 1911. Josh Whitesell had a baseball career that lasted over 12 years, spending 2008-2009 with the Arizona Diamondbacks as a first baseman. Sheldon Jones was a Major League pitcher 1946-1953, marrying an Adams young lady in 1950 and moving to Williamstown that same year.

Our next group of players had the same combination of determination, hard work and a gift, but didn't quite make it to the majors. Whether not given the right break or injured at the wrong time, they were still professional players. Billy Hart was an outstanding athlete - football, basketball, baseball

- you name the game, he could play it. Probably one of the best athletes Berkshire County has seen, Billy was signed by the Chicago Cubs and played a year in the minors. Ryan Cameron was once a Red Sox farmhand and spent 10 years in the minors hoping to get his golden ticket. Tim Flaherty was another and, drafted by the San Francisco Giants, spent the next seven years fighting his way through the minors. Pat Keefe wasn't born here but was a Williams College grad who eventually settled here. He spent five years in the minors and many years playing for town and semi-pro teams in the area. Hank Bunoski was a graduate of St. Bonaventure College, a catcher by trade, and spent 4 years in the minors. Clarence "Bink" Wells, played one year in the minors but might be best known as a member of the Williamstown Independents semi-pro team, which pulled off the "Potato Caper" against the North Adams Incarnation team in the '30's. (The full story is in the exhibit.) We included Joe Larson, who is actually from Lanesborough, but he graduated from Mount Greylock. Drafted by the St. Louis Cardinals in 1992 as a pitcher, he spent two years in the Minor Leagues.

One more person included was Chris Conroy, who



**The standard baseball field has evolved significantly since 1859, when this diagram was made. In addition to the different distances, four-foot stakes used to mark the bases instead of plates.**

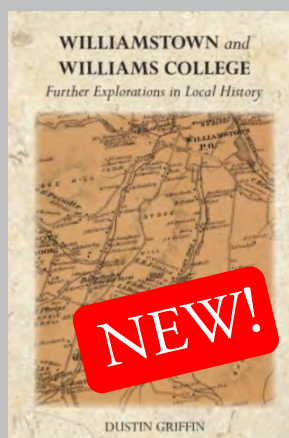
was born in North Adams but raised in Williamstown and is a Major League Umpire. He started his umpiring career in 2000 - working his way up the ranks to finally become a full-time Major League Umpire in 2013. You can see him today working games including All-Star and play-off contests.

The Clark Museum also has a connection to baseball: founder Sterling Clark was the brother of Stephen Clark, who started the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown. The rest of that story is also in our exhibit.

As you can see, Williamstown is a BIG part of the rich history of baseball in the Berkshires. With Williamstown being incorporated in 1765 - who knows? - There

may be undiscovered documents indicating baseball was played here before 1791. Come visit your historical museum!

*Larry Moore is one of the founding members of "Baseball in the Berkshires: A County's Common Bond," an organization that seeks to tell the story of baseball in our region through exhibits and educational programming. An offshoot of it, "Sliding Baseball Across Williamstown," has been installed as a temporary exhibit at the WHM and will be there through the summer. Stop by to learn more about local baseball history and these prominent figures!*



## *Williamstown and Williams College Further Explorations in Local History*

By Dustin Griffin  
Now available

Dustin Griffin has produced a sequel to *Williamstown and Williams College: Explorations in Local History* (2018). Like Griffin's previous book, this volume is a collection of microhistories, each of them focused on a single narrowly defined topic in the local history of Williamstown and its most notable local institution, Williams College. Griffin writes clearly and engagingly about places in Williamstown, events in the history of the town and college from the 18th century to the 1960s, and remarkable people, from a Williams College president to a four-generation local Black family. Based on documentary research, this book is designed to be accessible to the general reader. Contact the museum for a copy of the book or more information.

Price \$20

## Other Books for Sale

Support the WHM and local history!

*Williamstown the First 250 Years, 1753-2003*  
Hard cover \$20.00; Soft cover \$8.00

*Williamstown and Williams College  
Explorations in Local History*  
Dustin Griffin  
\$20.00

*Yankee Fiddler*  
Phillip Marshall Brown  
\$10.00

*Massachusetts in the  
Woman Suffrage Movement*  
Barbara F. Berenson  
\$20.00

Contact the museum to inquire about purchasing books:

[info@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org](mailto:info@williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org)  
413-458-2160





Dustin Griffin is professor emeritus of English at New York University and is a graduate of Williams College and a resident of Williamstown. He has done extensive research on the area's history. This summer, he will be sharing some of that research through a lecture series with the WHM. Below are two excerpts from essays he has recently written.

## Where is Clover Hill Farm?

By Dustin Griffin

If you attended the recent Town Meeting and stayed to the end, you might have noticed that the town approved a zoning bylaw amendment (Article 30), changing the zoning of "an area of Eastlawn Cemetery and Clover Hill Farm from Industrial to Residential." As the warrant explained, the amendment was designed to recognize that the original bylaw, reflecting a 1963 plan for a small industrial park along the Green River, was now obsolete. Where, you might ask, is Clover Hill Farm?

Unless you've visited the top of Eastlawn Cemetery the chances are you've never noticed it — an active farm close to the center of Williamstown, just half a mile from Spring Street. It's located on the east side of Green River, on a hilltop up a long driveway from Adams Road. For more than a hundred years it was operated as a dairy farm and for the last fifty years as a horse farm, but its history goes back to the founding of Williamstown.

It was once part of the Smedley Farm, established by Nehemiah Smedley, one of the town's original settlers. It remained in the Smedley family for more than a hundred years. In the late 19th century it was used as a summer residence for second-homers, and in 1911 was bought by a young dairy farmer, George Lowry, and his wife. They named it Clover Hill Farm, bought additional land over the years, and built a herd of 100 cows. At its peak the farm was about 200 acres, on either side of Stratton Road. Their son Floyd took over in 1944, and continued to deliver milk to his customers into the 1960s.

Beginning in the 1950s Lowry sold off some of the land. In 1973 he sold the core of the farm: the new owners converted it to a horse farm, where many Williamstown kids took riding lessons. Its current owner, Carolyn Henderson, boards horses and operates a guest house on the property as a country inn.

## The Williams College Faculty Softball Team

By Dustin Griffin

In the 1950s and '60s the faculty at Williams College fielded a softball team that played in the old intramural fraternity league. They even won a few games from teams fielded by Williams fraternities, whose members were half their age. Until he retired in 1958 the team was organized by Charlie Keller, of the History Department. And when in 1955 the college established a "Summer Executive Program," a residential institute providing liberal-arts mini-courses for corporate executives, the faculty who taught in the program got a team together to play the businessmen three or four times over a six-week period after class in the afternoons, from the mid-'50s to the mid-'90s.

The program faculty, and the team, consisted of some familiar names of long-time Williams faculty and Williamstown residents who are no longer with us: Fred Greene from Political Science, the director; Vince Barnett (Political Science), Kermit Gordon (Economics), and Irwin Shainman (Music). Some others, now retired from teaching, are still seen around town, including Bob Bell (English), Roger Bolton (Economics), John Chandler (Religion), Andy Crider (Psychology), and Mark Taylor (Religion).

The regular pitcher was John Chandler. As a kid growing up in North Carolina in the 1930s and early '40s, he had developed his pitching skills. He continued to play for the faculty team into his 60s. Vince Barnett played until he was nearly 70, but he always had a pinch runner. Chandler remembers that Bob Spivey, a young member of the Religion Department in the early '60s who had been an athletic star as an undergraduate at Duke, was the best athlete. In the early years Fred Greene played first base, and in later years served as team manager. Renzie Lamb, lacrosse coach and Athletic Director, served as umpire. Sometimes students had to be recruited to fill out the side. In the '80s and early '90s, the Summer Executive Program included some women executives, who joined their team.

Gary Jacobsohn, then a young assistant professor of Political Science, remembered forty years later that he was a member of the team, "pitching sometimes and anchoring the hot corner when not flashing the leather at short." We were, he said, "a gritty bunch known for striking fear in the hearts of corporate America."



**Floyd Lowry, right, took over Clover Hill Farm in 1944, and is pictured fixing drill machinery. The farm is practically as old as Williamstown itself, and is notable for its proximity to the center of town.**

## Upcoming lectures

*Please join us at these free events through Zoom. Links will be available on our website and members will receive email notification. Recordings will be posted afterwards.*

**Saturday, June 19, 11 a.m.**

### Writing Local History

Learn how to research and write about local history in this webinar! In this informal presentation, Griffin will share his processes and sources. The webinar will cover choosing a topic, gathering evidence, and organizing that evidence into a story. It will also show helpful sources and materials, many available through the WHM.

**Dustin Griffin**

**Summer Lecture Series**

**Saturday, July 31, 11 a.m.**

**The Black Inhabitants of White Oaks**

**Saturday, August 29, 11 a.m.**

**Native Americans in Williamstown**

**Saturday, September 25, 11 a.m.**

**The Dunbar Connection: Williams College and a Segregated High School**

## Hay Day Is Back!

The WHM's annual celebration is making a return this year. Please join us on **Sunday, August 15, from 11-3** for the following:

**Music**

**Food**

**Vendors**

**Childrens' games**

**Silent auction**

**...and much more**

Hay Day will take place at the museum, 32 New Ashford Road. We look forward to seeing you there!

## Upcoming History Book Group

Have you read a good book lately? Would you recommend it to a history book group? Would you like to learn about other good history books? Please join the Williamstown Historical Museum's gathering of friendly readers who meet for discussion about books with historical themes on one Thursday each month from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

On July 8, 2020 the group will discuss *Transatlantic* by **Colum McCann**. We will meet in person at the museum, 32 New Ashford Road. Please bring a mask, even if vaccinated.

The group welcomes new participants to share observations and ideas, and all are invited to attend even if they have not read the book!

## Digital Research Resources Available!

Visit the Williamstown Historical Museum to access digital research resources including newspapers.com. Staff and greeters are available to get you started on your research today!

You may also access our collection online by visiting [www.williamstown.pastperfectonline.com](http://www.williamstown.pastperfectonline.com).

**Williamstown  
Historical  
Museum**

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32 New Ashford Road  
Williamstown, MA 01267

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**To Join or Make a Donation Online:**

[www.williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.williamstownhistoricalmuseum.org)



# Swimming in Williamstown

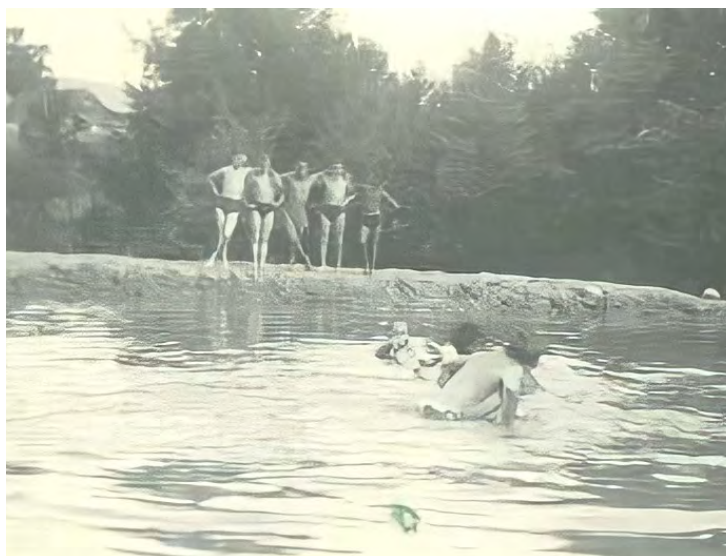
Although known more for its mountains than its lakes, locals and visitors have long found places to jump in the water and cool off during the hot days of summer.



What is now Margaret Lindley Park, 1960s



Sucker Hole, Green River, unknown date



Boy Scouts at a pond off Cold Spring Road, 1940s



Sand Springs, 1915



Synchronized swimmers at Camp Muriel Flagg, unknown date