



Swansea Historical Society Newsletter

The Preservationist

Founded

1941

SWANSEA, MASSACHUSETTS

swanseahistoricalsociety.org

FALL 2024

History of the Town Hall, Swansea, MA

In 1882, Christ Church started the "Christ Church Book Circle." There were 21 members. The Book Circle selected and purchased 21 books at the cost of \$1.12 per member. For its first year, the book club was located at the Israel Brayton House, owned by Joseph S. Chase at that time.

The annual membership fee of \$1 and lifetime fee of \$10 as well as public entertainment to raise money kept the book club / library alive. The first purchase of books was made November 21, 1883 when 21 clothbound volumes and nine in paper covers were added at an expense of \$20. By June 1884, the book club / library was moved to the vacant store building owned by Mrs. Catherine Gardner, where it remained until October 1, 1885. It was then located in an old store and post office building, long occupied by Honorable John Mason. That property was owned by the Honorable Frank S. Stevens.

At this time, there were three halls available for the residents of the Swansea Village, Hortonville area and Sharp's Lot Road area to be used as meeting halls: a building on Locust Street, now a residence; the Union Meeting Hall, a privately owned community building located at the current Town Hall site; and the Case Hall,



owned by Joseph and Eliza Case, located on the Case Hotel grounds. All three of these buildings were used as meeting halls, dance halls, places for funerals, selectmen's meetings, etc.

Selectman's meetings were also held in private residences as well as all three meeting halls.

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SHS Trough

The trough sits in front of the Luther Store. It has been called the water fountain and it also had a lamp post in the center.

In 1906, the trough was donated to the Town of Swansea by Lizzie and Emma Borden. It was made in 1880 by the Henry F. Jenks Foundry, in Pawtucket Rhode Island.

The trough has been cleaned and painted black. Swansea Historical Society member Brandon Travers has donated his time to do this for us. The top portion of the trough will be sealed. We will be adding soil and planting a Victorian Garden in the trough.



SHS Membership Drive



The Swansea Historical Society is currently running a membership drive.

We need your help to preserve and share Swansea history. You can also help us with the maintenance and repair costs to save the Luther Store for future generations.

Helen Pierce Collection

The SHS has a collection of local family files compiled by Helen Pierce. Some families have numerous pages; others have only one or two; some just have correspondences; some have family trees. We may or may not have what you are looking for but we would be happy to check for you. These are the family names we have available:

*AMEY- AMES- AMESWILL- ANGELL- ANTHONY- ARNALD

*BABBITT- BAKER- BARNABY - BARNEY- BRIGGS-BOWEN- BOWERS- BOND- BROWN

*CARPENTER- CASE- CHACE/CHASE- CHURCH- COGGSHELL- COLBY- COLE- COOK- CUTTER

*DIXWELL

*FIELDS

*GARDNER- GIBBS- GREENE

Helen Pierce Collection cont'd

*HAMMOND- HATHAWAY- HAYWARD-HICKS/HIX- HILL- HOLT

*INGALLS

*JAY- JENKS-JONES

*LANE- LAWTON- LEE- LEONARD- LUTHER

*MARBLE- MANCHESTER- MARTIN- MASON- MILLER- MITCHELL-MILES AND MISC.

*NEWCOMB- NICHOLS-

*PALMER- PARKER- PERRY - PETERSHAM-

*RATHBUN- RICHMOND- ROGERS- ROUNDS

*SALISBURY- SHERMAN- SHORT- SLADE- SMITH- SPENCER- SNOW- SPRAGUE

*TABOR- THURBER- TRIPP

*WARREN- WASILIK- WHEATON- WILBUR/WILBOR- WILCOX- WILLIAMS- WILLET- WINSLOW -WOOD-WOODREFF

History of the Town Hall, Swansea, MA *cont'd.*

Around 1887, the Union Hall was showing its age and lack of care. It was a privately owned community building. By 1889, the building could no longer be used. At this point in time the book club / Library needed a permanent home.

In 1890, Frank S. Stevens offered to fund a new Town Hall to take the place of the Union Meeting Hall.

There were stipulations to his offer as long as the building would be used as a library and selectmen's office along with a meeting hall. In 1891, the new Town Hall for Swansea was erected.

The library was located where the selectmen's office is now. The selectmen's office was located in the space of the current tax assessor's office. Within a year, the library outgrew the space and bookcases were being placed in the hall which was cutting down on meeting space.

A second location for the Swansea Free Public Library was open to September 26, 1896. There is much more history on the Swansea Public Library which will be covered at a later time.

In 1898, Frank S. Stevens passed away. He willed \$10,000 to the Town of Swansea for a new public library building. The building was erected and opened in 1900 and named the Frank S. Stevens Public Library.

After the opening of the new library building, the Town Hall was able to be used as a meeting space. The hall on Locust Street along with the Case Hall remained open and in use as meeting halls.



Please visit our website at swanseahistoricalsociety.org and click on the "Store" link to see our available items for purchase – mugs, wind spinners, rope bowls and many other items!.

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Monetary Donations are always accepted! Donations will be used for restoration and repairs only, not for operating funds.



Upcoming Events

December 7th, 2024

Swansea's Holiday in the Village

April. 6th, 2025

Poetry Reading & Photography Display
by James Bronson

Date TBD

Spring Vendor Craft Fair

September 2025

SHS Annual Meeting

October 2025.

Pumpkin Patch Event

October 2025.

Abram's Rock Walk

Family Association Links

Luther Family Association
- <https://www.lutherfamily.info>

Barney Family Historical Association
- <https://www.barneyfamily.org>

The Eddy Family Association
- <https://www.eddyfamilyassociation.com>

SHS Officers & Board

President - Carl Becker,
Vice President - Cheryl Bogle
Treasurer - Robbie Alford
Secretary - OPEN

Paul Cote
Patricia Redfearn
Karen Bowen

Diane Luther Silvia
Carol Gafford
Kathleen LeBlanc

Luther Store Update

The next step in the restoration /repair of the Luther Store is to take down the 1st floor plaster ceiling and inspect & repair the 2nd floor joists that have been damaged from Powder Post Beetles. The ceiling is not original to the building and the SHS will decide in the future if it should be replaced.

The ceiling was added by J.G. Luther, Jr. to brighten the space and help his store better compete with the the new Eddy Store. The Eddy Store was bright and white inside.

Swansea Garden Club

Thank you to the Swansea Garden Club for their help in cleaning up the grounds of the Luther Store and preparing them for winter.

Our 2024 Events

September - Annual Meeting followed by a talk by Bill Hall on "World War II – the German Soviet Union Conflict"

October - Pumpkin Patch event and Paul Cote took people on the always popular Annual Abram's Rock Walk

December - Swansea Holiday in the Village event

Recipe Corner



Aunt Polly's Press Cookies

3 cups flour 1 cup shortening
1 cup sugar 1 tsp baking powder
2 eggs 1 tsp baking soda
½ teaspoon salt 4 tbls milk
2 tsp vanilla

Cream shortening and sugar together and add eggs(beat) milk and vanilla mix. Sift together dry ingredients add to shortening mixture mix thoroughly. Press cookies- fill cookies press begin.

Cut out cookies- chill dough for one hour flour board, roll out dough to ¼ inch, flour cutters and begin.

Place on greased cookie sheet. Bake for 5-8 minutes until golden brown in a 325 degree oven.

Tips- if decorating with sprinkles do so before baking. Do not over cream sugar and shortening dough will be too soft and you will use more flour than needed.

In Memory of Violet F. Dennis