



Mason Barney's Portrait

by Russell Easterbrooks

The only known portrait of Mason Barney is hanging in the Swansea Town Hall and was donated by Algernon Barney's heirs, as a warrant article documented in the town's records on October 20th 1975.

Barney's portrait is not signed by the artist, which is not unusual. My research leads me to believe the artist is most likely Chester Harding, a prominent American portrait painter, who did a number of portraits that were unsigned.

Harding lived in Boston during the 1830's, making him just a stage coach ride to Swansea. During 1836 Harding traveled to Providence, RI to do a portrait of Nicholas Brown Jr., the namesake of Brown University. This places Harding very close to North Swansea and Mason Barney's estate.

Barney's portrait shows him holding a wallet. This was something Harding would sometimes do, use a symbolic object in his paintings, to highlight the profession of the sitter. In this case a wallet filled with money symbolic of Barney's shipyard business.

Facial modeling, brushwork, and compositional items / setting, align with Harding's style. Comparison testing shows, the shirt and collar used on many of Harding's paintings display nearly identical brush strokes as seen on Barney's portrait.

Harding painted over 1000 portraits during his lifetime, including presidents James Madison the 4th and John Quincy Adams the 6th. Harding also did portraits of frontier men like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett.

Harding could have done Barney's portrait during his trip to Providence.

Barney could have known of Harding's ability to immortalize his portraits, making him one of the most sought after artist of his time. During the 1830's, the charge for a portrait was \$150- \$250. That is equivalent to \$3500- \$4000 at today's prices.

Research is ongoing, looking for documented proof that Harding was the artist of Mason Barney's portrait. But for now, all roads lead to Chester Harding.

Note: This article is the opinion of the author and not The Swansea Historical Society. It is published with his permission.



Portrait of Mason Barney

Donated to the Town of Swansea by the Algernon H. Barney family. Currently hangs in the Town Hall of Swansea

Luther Store Update

What has been done to date:

*75% of 1st floor framing replaced due to termite infestation. Pest Control Company has been retained to do bait trapping of termites, mice and other pests.

* Bats have been relocated and building has been sealed.

* Hearth and hearth support rebuilt located in first floor addition

* The crawl space floor under the back addition was covered with concrete. This is an additional step to help reduce humidity and aid in pest control.

* First floor ceiling removed to expose the 2nd floor framing issues.

* 2nd floor joist replaced and reinforced. Replacement of a portion of the top wall plate due to advanced deterioration from moisture infiltration from leaking window and high humidity in the building

* Two permanent columns placed in the 1st floor back addition to support 2nd floor attic space and portion of the Library room due to long term sagging of the support beams.

* Two exhaust fans placed in basement windows to aide in the reduction of humidity in the building. In the near future our plan is to make the building as weather tight and climate controlled as possible when funding becomes available. This will stop the costly reoccurrence and deterioration of the buildings structure that continues to happen every 10 to 15 years. Dehumidifiers cannot be placed in the building until the building is rewired and made weather tight. Placing dehumidifiers in the building before this is done would be grossly inefficient and costly.

All structural repairs to date have been paid from CPC funding.

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Mason Barney Shipyard

Mason Barney took over his father's boat yard in 1799 at the age of 17. The information that we have is that his father moved to New York and was not a part of the shipyard. Mason turned his father's boat yard into a shipyard and within approximately 3 years he launched his first vessel.

From 1799 through 1859, 222 ships were launched from the Mason Barney Shipyard.



Mason Barney Shipyard on the banks of the Palmer River

SHS Annual Meeting

September 21st, 2025

Swansea Community Center

Luther Store Update *cont'd*

To be completed by September 2025:

*2nd floor wall brick wall to be removed, rebuilt out of stick. This is being done due to advanced deterioration.

*Support beam of the 2nd floor wall to be reinforced with steel plates due to insufficient support for long period of time causing severe deflection.



* Electrical wiring to be replaced through the entire building. This is being paid for by a private donation of \$10,000.

The Luther Store cannot reopen until all structural and environmental issues are taken care of.

Luther Store Update *cont'd*

We will continue to give you updates. They will be available on our website and Facebook pages. If you have any questions you can contact Cheryl Bogle at integracrete2@gmail.com or 508-496-9564

Donations of any amount would be greatly appreciated.

Pumpkin Judges Needed

We will need judges this fall for our pie baking and pumpkin decoration contests. If you would like to volunteer to be a judge, please contact Cheryl Bogle at 508-496-9564 or Integracrete2@gmail.com.

Pie Baking Contest entrance fee is \$5 per pie with recipe.

Pumpkin Decorating Contest is free to enter.

Please visit our website or our Facebook page for more information on how to submit a pie or a decorated pumpkin for judging.

Signs, Plaques & Historical Prints

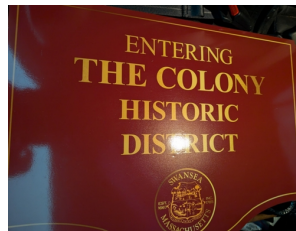
The Swansea Historical Commission has been working with the Swansea Historical Society to have signs, plaques and prints installed around the town.

Two signs are being erected for our Historic Districts. A replacement sign is being erected for the Barneyville Historic District. The original sign was stolen several years ago. A new sign is being erected for the Colony Historic district which is located at the end of Gardners Neck. This district was placed on the National Registry in 1978 but a sign was never erected.

In addition to the Historic District signs, prints have been created to be framed and displayed in the Frank S. Stevens School (Swansea School Superintendent's Building) on the sides of the Frank S. Stevens portrait. One will be an informational sign for Elizabeth Stevens Brown and the other will be information on the one room schoolhouses in the Swansea Village and the Frank S. Stevens school.

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!

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



Centenarian Jessie Sampson Barney displays medal from President Carter

WW Memorabilia Talk

Following the Annual Meeting on September 21st, Brandon Travers will be speaking on World Wars I and II memorabilia.

Upcoming Events

September 21st, 2025

SHS Annual Meeting **1 p.m.**
World Wars I & II Memorabilia **2 p.m.**
Swansea Community Center

October 11th, 2025

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Pumpkin Patch Event
Pumpkin & Apple Pie Baking Contest
Pumpkin Decorating Contest
Call now to enter!

October 26th, 2025

Abram's Rock Walk

November 8th, 2025 1 p.m.

Workshop for Christmas Wreaths & Swags

SHS Officers & Board

President - Carl Becker,	
Vice President - Cheryl Bogle	
Treasurer - Robbie Alford	
Acting Secretary - Cheryl Bogle	
Paul Cote	Diane Luther Silvia
Patricia Redfearn	Carol Gafford
Karen Bowen	Kathleen LeBlanc