

CHEQUAQUET LOG

The Newsletter of the **CENTERVILLE**
HISTORICAL MUSEUM www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org

A LOOK BACK AND FORWARD DURING THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

The holiday decorations make our villages and homes look cheery. Shoppers are busy choosing gifts for loved ones and friends. At first glance all is just the same as the Christmas of 2019. Let us keep that spirit as we remember that 2020 has been so different. It will be different for a while longer, too.

Yes, the spirit of those around us is still strong. All of us have had to change plans, delay visits and listen to communications from the medial experts. We have had to think of ourselves but we have had to think of others just as well and we will be victorious in the coming months.

The museum has had a quiet but fulfilling year. Visitor numbers are down, but those who have toured our new and older exhibits have expressed exclamations of pleasure at the diversity and professionalism of what we are proud to show them.

Events have been canceled, one after the other as the past year progressed. They will be back, we guarantee; we just have to wait a little longer. There are new wonderful happenings that are in the planning stage. For instance, the upcoming radio Mystery Theater. Written by Jane Hattemer-Stringer, this original work should be ready for broadcast early in 2021. Funny and with an interesting cast of characters, an evening of a "whodunnit" mystery will be a refreshing hour or so of entertainment.

Another new exhibit is also just newly completed. It features Centerville's Crosby family during the 19th and early 20th century, with

all sorts of gleanings from Bebe Brock's attic and home to the Crosby family. Patient reading of papers has formed a picture of Centerville during these years of early village life and business. This new exhibit is really worth a visit.

Also new is an expert sewing circle. With our exciting textile collection, stored so safely in their acid free tissue and boxes, the museum through the past months has gathered a bevy of expert sewers who, with their skills, have already begun to mend, correct, repair and replace the tiny and larger sewing tasks needed for delicate antique garments. These new volunteers will keep our fabric and clothing collection in great condition. Hurray!

Along with the museum's positive outlook for 2021, we would like to remind you, if you have not done so, to please help the museum's dwindling finances due to less monies collected during this past year, by giving generously to this year's appeal. Bills must be paid and buildings must be kept in good and usable condition. This museum is important to our community and we do need your financial help. Also, our museum shop is open and all items are on sale.

From our volunteers, staff and visitors, a round of applause. To all of you who have helped keep the

museum in your thoughts and support, a huge thank you. May the days ahead be happy and safe and may your dreams be as big and joyous as the spirit of Christmas upon us.

LOIS LANE
writer at large



V O L U N T E E R I N G

IN PRAISE OF INVOLVEMENT-BONNIE WENGER AND FAMILY

Sometimes it all comes down to luck. That luck has made Centerville Historical Museum much richer in types of events, number of events and hugely popular events over the last few decades.

Meet Bonnie Wenger. Since the 1980's, with time spent in Connecticut before a return to Centerville, Bonnie and her family have lived next door to the museum. The location being so close, with the combination of Bonnie's enjoyment of both history and entertaining, plus the contribution of several of her other talents, has made the museum a popular place to gather, a better museum and has helped raise needed funds to allow it to keep its doors open.

Bonnie's husband, Bob, has served as the museum's president. Both have contributed innumerable hours, as has their daughter, Kristen, to think of timely themes to draw members and visitors alike. For instance, Bonnie is an outstanding area hairdresser. Her interest in history has led her to find and create the perfect hairstyle for mannequins on display in specific time periods. For the new Halloween evening stroll in 2019, she created dripping blood and pallid faces and shadowy creatures with straggly locks that greeted visitors to the museum before their tours of Main Street and its ghostly stories from the street's rich past.



Nothing seems to faze her. Problems are surmounted and any event has been greeted with praise. Through the years, various get-togethers, all fund raisers, have been well attended. Bonnie's first function, in 1989, was a cocktail party with music. A hundred people showed up and it was a huge hit. Further popular get-togethers and fundraisers included formal soirees that featured the colors black, red or white. Other evenings had a hippie theme, or a hat theme. Bonnie's food (she is an excellent cook), made in her own kitchen and brought from her home to the museum, plus music, was an enhancement to both guests and to the museum alike.

Progressive dinners, with Bonnie providing the recipes and ingredients for participating cooks to host the dinners in their own homes, also proved popular. With the Wengers alone, or in coordination with other culinary partners, they have provided wonderful food selections resulting in well attended events. Another hidden talent which has pleased many of our visitors is Bonnie's gift at wine and food pairing. She is the adhoc museum sommelier for many museum fundraisers

The list of endeavors by this great friend of the museum could go on and on. All of it is grounded in a love of history, family heirlooms, memories and a liking for antiques. Besides food, Bonnie excels in crafts. Christmas fairs would not be the same without her miniature Christmas trees, wreaths and dried arrangements. The gift shop always has items brought in by this most talented woman. Kudos and a well-earned round of applause to Bonnie Wenger and her family for all they have done, and will do, to allow our museum to continue to serve our visitors, members and neighbors.



I N T E R E S T I N G H I S T O R Y

ONE LITTLE KINDNESS CAN CHANGE A LIFE

When visitors visit Frederick Douglass's gracious home atop a hill in southeast Washington, D.C. today a National Historic Site, they can scarcely believe one small act of kindness brought him fame and fortune.

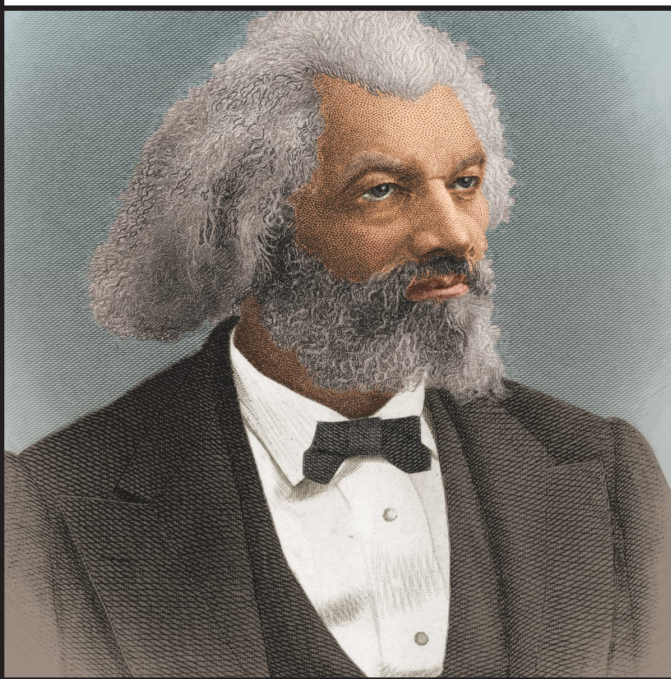
Born into slavery on a farm in eastern Maryland in 1818, Frederick's original name was Bailey. When he was eight years old, his master's wife, recognizing the character and brightness of this youngster, resolved to teach him to read. She only achieved



partial success because laws were passed making the teaching of slaves to read and write illegal and a prison sentence awaited if anyone was caught doing so. Frederick, from that point on, begged and found his way to learn the alphabet on his own. He somehow realized reading and writing were skills necessary to succeed in whatever his future life involved.

He escaped from his owners at age 20, changed his last name to Douglass and found his way to New York City and then New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he borrowed papers from a free black sailor to escape from bondage. He was introduced to abolitionist William Henry Lloyd Garrison and became Garrison's friend and follower. Others noticed his flair and passion for speaking on abolition issues and they encouraged him to use that ability to support himself financially.

In the 1850's the Supreme Court ruled that fugitive slaves could be captured in free states. Douglass had written an autobiography that named his owner and former place of slavery, which put his life in jeopardy. He fled to and toured the British Isles, speaking against slavery and enthraling his audiences so heartily that they raised the bondage fee of \$711 and bought his freedom. With his new status, Douglass returned to the United States and settled in Rochester, New York, a center for abolition and women's rights.



Before and during the Civil War, Douglass visited the White House and President Abraham Lincoln. His reputation and talent for words and ideas influenced Lincoln's decision to grant freedom to slaves in those states where slaves were owned in 1862. This achievement allowed Douglass and his family to build a home in Washington, D.C. Douglass served as minister to Haiti. He was also a U.S. Marshall for the District of Columbia and its Recorder of Deeds. He died at the age of seventy-one, a famed orator for his cause. His words and the strength of their truths live on. "If there is no struggle there is no progress," he said. "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

C U R R E N T E X H I B I T

THE WAIST, SHIRTWAIST AND BLOUSE HOW AND WHY THESE CHANGED WOMEN'S FASHION

A remarkable display is center stage in the Phinney Room at the museum. Several gorgeous frocks greet the visitor. Behind them in a glass case are a variety of bodices. At first, the front part of the display seems disjointed from the back part. Soon the puzzle is solved. Those dresses are each in two pieces, with a bodice or waist as the upper half of the outfit. Paired with a matching skirt, each gives the outfit the look of a singular piece.

The waist has been around since about 1840 when, for fashion or other use, a dress might be remade. Most waists were highly crafted. The display window's bottom row has a waist with side panels of blue patterned silk topped by a finely pleated gauze. The clever seamstress has probably used scraps of the blue silk to form one part of a new bodice and added other fabrics to finalize the design of her waist. Those scraps may have been repurposed from skirt portions of other gowns. Innovation called for saving the larger swaths of cloth in the original skirt to be added to other clothing items. As practicality only went so far, the much adorned and lacy tops could not be washed easily, so each waist's repurposing proved new but not long lasting.

Waists could be plain or fancy, but as time passed, women's fashions adjusted to new freedom of movement. Lawn tennis, croquet and biking attracted women. Fancier tops were not necessary to play a sport. Men, by the 1870's or so, were wearing plain long-sleeved shirts with interchangeable cuffs and collars. They also wore narrow ties. Women began to copy both shirt and tie (or bow at the neck) and soon their imitations were called shirtwaists. Along with these inexpensive but simply styled tops, the separate skirt came to be indispensable. It could also be easily cleaned. For years, women's shirtwaists remained unadorned as they soon adapted the shirtwaist and skirt for a work setting such as a factory, school or office.

Of course, styles changed. Some shirtwaists by 1906 had new sleeve designs or were paneled or even appliqued with touches of lace or ribbon, but the basic plain woman's shirtwaist was popular with all classes. One added touch was the ensemble, which consisted of shirtwaist and skirt with matching jacket, and from that combination came women's suits.

Added to the waist and the slimmer styled shirtwaist came the blouse, from the French word "blouson." By the 1920's, this looser and less confining top was a popular addition to any two-piece outfit. Women's trousers had appeared by now and the relaxed blouse paired well with both skirts and slacks.

All in all, from corsets to softer undergarments, the waist began a trend for two-piece clothing, followed by the more comfortable shirtwaist and blouse. Come visit the museum and delight in this unique showing of how women's fashion evolved through time with elements of it still part of ladies' outfits today.



NEW EXHIBIT

AN ATTIC FIND LEADS TO A NEW DISPLAY

Bebe Brock was browsing in her attic one day when she came upon some dusty boxes. What she discovered is now on display in the Ayling room. What a find! Titled, "Lives and Times of Centerville's Crosbys," the house on Main Street has for years kept its history hidden from view until this past summer when the papers were delivered, dusted off, sorted, read and chosen to reveal the everyday life of one Centerville family through a hundred years and more of village life and business.

Cleverly placed in four glass cases, bills, political pamphlets, receipts, licenses, personal letters and invitations are categorized by subject as are family photos. Gorham and Aaron Crosby vie with others who wrote and recorded for history, daily, legal and business undertakings for over most of the 19th century and into the beginning of the 20th.

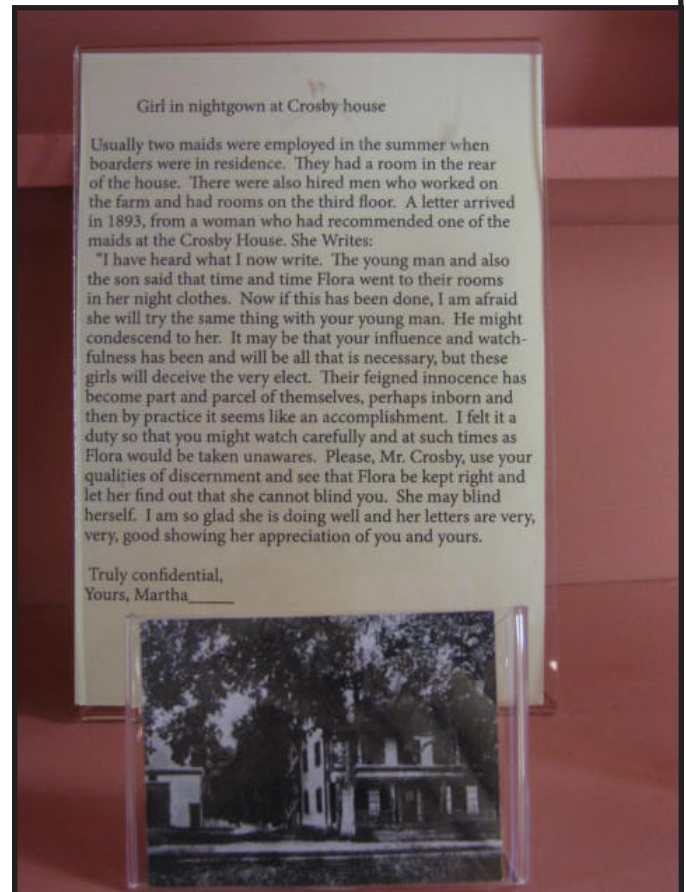
School district reports, a playbill for a two-part student dramatic presentation, "Down by the Sea" and "Bread on the Waters," photos of Crosby students, an arithmetic test from 1865, a portrait of teacher Eugene Tappan, who was also instrumental in helping to found Centerville's library, are among the various educational discoveries.

Gorham and Aaron Crosby, father and son, had many business ventures. The daily stagecoach, the only public transportation at the time, stopped right in front of the Crosby house, which was for some years a hotel, making it and Hallett's General Store and the Post Office the center of Centerville's business area. The hotel was a gathering place, too, for local town residents and hotel guests to meet and greet throughout the day and into the evening. A license for buying and selling milk, dog licenses, Internal Revenue licenses and an auctioneer's license of 1855 show further business entrepreneurship.

The Crosbys sold horse blankets, offered carriage rides and carriages and surreys for sale as well as accessories for same. A receipt for the delivery of thirty barrels of cranberries bound for Boston in the later 1800's shows the Old Colony Railroad Company had come to the area.

Very interesting is personal correspondence. Surprisingly, proper grammar is not especially important to the writers and neither is good penmanship. Letters seem written hastily, as if the writer dashes off pertinent information so he can send news of family or friends as well as gossip quickly. Dance cards, reception invitations and summer musical programs, all printed formally, are placed to one side of the display.

In the 19th century, Centerville's Crosby family's political leanings edged toward Abraham Lincoln's Republican party. Political papers from the Republican Club of Massachusetts and a pamphlet entitled, "Facts for the People-Democratic Falsehoods," a printed card with Aaron Crosby as one of four delegates to the State Convention and a Women's Suffrage Association letter to Aaron Crosby in 1915 which asks his support for its cause are among the discoveries of this new and surprisingly comprehensive collection of the daily lives of one family and of the town and community in which they lived, worked and represented.



MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

Dear Friend,

The Centerville Historical Museum is a special place, and we are asking you to become a member. If you have visited our museum, read our newsletters, view our website, or seen postings on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, or seen videos on YouTube; I think you'll agree that we have many interesting things to offer.

The museum is dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of not only Centerville but also the Cape. And it's an integral part of Centerville's Main Street, which is one of the most intact 19th century village centers to be found on Cape Cod.

If you haven't been to the museum recently, you'll be fascinated with our current exhibits: What's Underneath, and The Waist both featuring garments from our extensive costume collection. A timely exhibit for the 100th anniversary of Prohibition is The Speakeasy an in depth look at the prohibition years both nationally and regionally. Our largest exhibit Battles; Spies; Cooties - The Great War features: the birth of Intelligence Agencies; the development of weapons that never before existed; personal accounts by veterans on the front in the trenches and much more.

Housing and protecting over 16,000 objects in our collection and utilizing twelve exhibit rooms in which to display them, you'll find every time you visit there is something you haven't encountered before.

Please join us as a member, participate in our activities and help us preserve our history. Thank you for having an interest in this museum.

Centerville Historical Museum

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