

CHEQUAQUET LOG

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

THESE DAYS THE MUSEUM NEEDS EVERYONE'S HELP

A few weeks ago, Time Magazine ran an article on the country's museums. Due to Covid-19, attendance is way down and interest has waned for the time being. The article gives examples of better known museums than Centerville's, but the gist of the article could have been written about any museum on Cape Cod.

Across the country, museums are begging for funds to keep open. This phenomenon is wide spread. Drive to almost any location, notice whether a well-known museum is open or closed, and if you are fortunate to be able to view a wonderful piece of history, then good for you.

The Centerville Historical Museum has been able to stay open a good part of 2020 and it intends to continue unless state or local rules change. The displays we have are really great. Volunteers research, search our 16,000 item collection for interesting and meaningful topics, then work to set them up in an appealing manner. There is banter and serious consideration, frustration and finally triumph as each new showing comes together nicely.

Painters paint walls, gowns are made presentable, additional little bits are added to enhance a display, fabrics are fluffed and gently pressed or if need be, cleaned in careful ways. Careful repairs are done when needed. Most of



all, after a lot of work, from director to volunteer, it all comes to fruition and it is time to show it all off.

We at this heart of Centerville need your help, though. Attendance is down, any moneymaking events have been canceled or postpone to whenever. Is it a question of deciding between going to the symphony or going to a local museum? Whatever the answer, the museum is starting its annual appeal and this year, right now, huge support is needed. Expenses must be paid. Repairs to the building are on hold-again. Money is not wasted on frivolities. The budget covers what is necessary, period.

Centerville takes pride in its history. There is much to tell. Visitors are amazed when they see how extensive the building is and how many varied historical subjects can be displayed. Time and time again, guests say our museum is the most interesting they have seen on the Cape.

Does this community still want a tribute to its history? If yes, then please help us during this time when so many factors have contributed to the lessening number of visitors and events that have affected museums in general, ours among them. Our many thanks, too, for support.

If your interested in helping go to the last page or to our website www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org and click the support tab or the gold colored Donate button.

H A L L O W E E N H I S T O R Y

HOW DID HALLOWEEN COME ABOUT?

Halloween this year is Saturday, October 31st. Whether little gremlins (and bigger ones, too) will come knocking on the door for treats is the question, due to the pandemic.

How did this October happening happen? Over 2,000 years ago, the Celtic tribes of Ireland, Britain and northern France celebrated the end of the summer harvest and the beginning of “darkness” or winter, a time associated with human death. The Celts called this celebration Samhain, when ghosts of the dead returned to earth. Druid priests made prophecies and gave comfort for the cold months ahead. The tribe wore costumes and built huge bonfires and from those bonfires, lit their own hearth fires to keep warm for the coming season.



The Romans conquered much Celtic territory by 43 A.D and ruled it for the next 400 years. Two Roman festivals, Feralia, which also had to do with the passing of the dead, and Pomona, to honor the Roman goddesses of fruit and trees, and especially the apple from which the tradition of bobbing for apples may have come from, eventually intertwined with Samhain.

Within the next centuries, Christianity spread throughout Celtic lands, allowing Samhain and All Martyrs Day, now named All Souls Day, to further influence each other, with both noting the dead around the first of November. Each group celebrated with huge bonfires, parades, costumes such as saints, angels and devils. The All Saints Day name was shortened to All-hallows, then All-Hallows Eve, and eventually to Halloween.

In America, Halloween was not celebrated in the 1600’s due to rigid religious beliefs held then, but later, as settlers moved on, new Europeans, American Indians and citizens came together for Halloween play parties where public events were held to honor a good harvest. The same stories of the dead, the telling of fortunes and dancing and singing were enhanced each October.

Irish potato famine victims arrived in America in the 1840’s and they spread their notion of Halloween. Costumes and asking for food in the neighborhood became popular. There was a movement in the late 1800’s to get rid of ghosts, pranks and witchcraft notions. By the 1900’s the frightening aspects of the original celebrations had been eliminated. Superstitious and religious overtones were largely discarded over the next years.

By the 1920’s and 30’s, Halloween had become secular but community-centered with parades and some town-wide parties. Three decades later, the activities were mostly directed at the young in the neighborhood and sponsored parties happened in the schoolroom or at home.

Today, 6 billion dollars a year is spent on Halloween, second behind Christmas. Now mystery and magic rule. Horror movies and themes have filled in for entertainment. People do not walk under ladders or avoid black cats or or step on a sidewalk crack or spill salt. Halloween is almost entirely different from its origins, yet its popularity continues to increase.



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

HETTY GREEN: "THE WITCH OF WALL STREET"

Known in her day as the richest woman in America and for a time the world, Hetty Green was a canny investor on Wall Street and a miser to boot.

Most people do not recognize Hetty Green's name today. Her life is, however, a fascinating study of the many sides of her personality, business acumen and philosophy. Born in 1834, in New Bedford, Massachusetts, Henrietta Howland Robinson was the only living child of a wealthy family, whose millions came from whaling and the China trade.

Due to a debilitating illness of her mother's, this inquisitive miss literally became her grandfather's daily companion. The family was Quaker and education for Hetty was private. Hetty, by the age of six, was thrilled to read her grandfather the daily stock quotations and commerce reports. By the age of fifteen she knew the family business and was trading commodities. She had discovered how to earn family praise, make money and do it well.

By the age of thirty, both Hetty's parents and her grandfather had died. Her estate, before a court fight with her aunt, was worth six million dollars (\$100,000,000 today). The courts decided against Hetty and reduced her worth by a large chunk, but she had invested in Civil War bonds which paid high gold yields, and in railroads. She recouped her inheritance quickly.

In 1867, at age thirty-three, Hetty was fabulously wealthy. When she wed Edward Henry Green that year, she insisted, even though Green himself, originally from Bellows Falls, Vermont, had his own fortune, a contract be drawn up that stipulated that Green "would not inherit any of his wife's money or be influenced by any interference of her husband." Even so, the marriage lasted and the Greens became parents to a son, Ned and a daughter, Sylvia.

Eventually Edward Green ran into deep financial debt and his wife bailed him out. She told people that women should learn to take care of their own financial affairs. She was now known as the Queen of Wall Street.

For all her wealth, Hetty Green lived as a miser. She did not heat her food. She lived in hotels and kept all her papers in trunks that never saw the inside of an office. She wore clothes until they fell apart and she rode in a dilapidated carriage. In a word, she was eccentric, but rich. She was also very generous. Without fanfare or publicity, Green quietly gave millions to the poor. "I believe in discreet charity," she said.

Being a rich woman in the Gilded Age (1870 – 1900) was a feat of extraordinary brilliance when Green was competing with the Astors and Rockefellers and Harrimams. The City of New York and the U.S. government came to Hetty for loans to keep finances afloat. She made the loans.

Hetty Green, whose further monikers included, "The Wizard of Finance" and "The Richest Woman in America," died in 1916, aged eighty-one, her worth estimated at five billion today. She is buried in Bellows Falls, Vermont, beside her husband. Her two children split her estate. Ned had interests in science and horticulture and left his mansion to MIT. Sylvia, married but childless, gave almost all her fortune to charities, churches and hospitals. Both children rest with their parents in the Bellows Falls Cemetery.

There was an old woman often seen plodding up and down Wall Street at the turn of the 20th century. She walked alone. Her black, faded dress was dirty and ragged at the seams. She carried a case with her with a pitiful lunch tossed inside, usually graham crackers or dry oatmeal. She was such a familiar sight, with her grim face and strange dress, everyone called her "The Witch of Wall Street."



E X H I B I T

WHAT'S UNDERNEATH ?

From the leather band around the chest to Madonna's cone bra to the thong, undergarments have always been more than frippery and lace. Wearing underclothes protected against sweat and stains to outer garments and they were washed probably two times a year.

Early undergarments were handmade, passed down to other members of the family and were simple in design. Women and men in Europe's Middle Ages wore no underclothes until the shift or chemise, a calf-length gown-like linen shirt worn day and night, came into vogue. These garments were worn by all classes, but slowly, wealthy women added corsets to bind the chest which contained stays made of whale baleen or wood and a wooden busk that went into an outer garment and did not allow anything but good posture. Men kept their shifts and began to add brais or trousers. Long stockings were added and in King Henry VIII's time, short balloon pants fronted by cod pieces were the rage.

Corsets, especially for women, were also worn by young children in the belief the garment would halt body deformity, thus causing deformity. The upper classes tightened their stays inside the dress, the poor classes wore a jump, a corset worn outside the garment, plus a bum roll under the skirt to give the look of wider hips.

Women wore corsets until into the 20th century at the behest of their menfolk's idea of beauty, forcing their bodies into uncomfortable shapes. From Queen Elizabeth I's flat top with wide hips accentuated with cage-like wood farthingales to uplifted bosoms with 16 inch waists and bustles to accentuate the derriere, to the Gibson Girl with her S shaped figure, to the 20's with straight neck to calf figures, to today's relaxed and comfortable undies, women have seen and worn it all and men have admired it.

Women's underdrawers appeared in the 19th century. Split drawers were a must in order to live with normal bodily functions as up to six petticoats were worn. Eventually pantaloons and bloomers, plus closed crotched underdrawers, appeared as women began to take interest in acceptable sports ventures.

Still, the corset reigned. The Gibson girl look ruled in the early 1900's. Then it all changed. Decade after decade saw the undergarment world refashion itself, starting with younger women. The corset was abandoned. Brassieres were patented in 1914. Petticoats became slips, along with garters for stockings and garter belts, and girdles made of newly invented stretchy fabric gained popularity.



World War I brought practical wear, for women were working in jobs never imagined before. Outer clothing changed, too, becoming less confining. World War II's sexy women symbols on aircraft introduced sex into undies, while ads pushed that aspect with Marilyn Monroe's torpedo bra in the 1950's. Style changes in the next decades included the flat-chested waif and the 70's fit woman dressed in close fitting styles. Women's bodies were no longer modest. Advertisements in the 80's featured women in bras as attending operas, in the Wild West, on flying carpets, pushing the concept of freedom and equality.

Today's woman can choose any style available. We may think we've seen it all, but what our underwear will look like in the future is anyone's guess.

Come and see our new exhibit on what lies underneath. It was an amazing project to put together and covers the nineteenth century to today. Visitors have been quite positive with this new display and we'd love to show it to you.

Centerville Historical Museum BUSINESS Supporters

We wish to acknowledge our current business members and business sponsors and ask you, our members, to support these businesses that support us.

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website: www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org

P H I L A N T H R O P Y

Dear Friend,

What a memorable year it has been thus far. Let us hope not to repeat it anytime soon. I need not explain the impact this year has had on all of us. We've all experienced difficulties. What you may not know is the effect on this museum. Thus far this year the museum has not earned \$24,000 in expected income due to cancelled events and being closed for six months. That income is critical for our annual budget.

We are asking you as a museum friend, to assist us in fulfilling our mission to the community by contributing to the Annual Appeal.

What is the Annual Appeal?

The Annual Appeal is not a membership. The Annual Appeal is the yearly effort to raise unrestricted funds to help bridge the gap between the total operating expense and the admission, event and membership incomes. This year that gap has increased significantly. The Annual Appeal supports areas that are fundamentally important to the operation of the museum.

Why you should support CHM?

The simple answer is that you value the contribution this museum offers to your community. Dollars raised through the Annual Appeal give CHM the ability to respond to challenges like the one we are in now. Your gift creates a partnership and the satisfaction that you support your community's cultural institutions.

How much should you give?

You determine the size of your gift according to your own interests and personal willingness to give. It is not so much the size of the gift as the cumulative effects of all our supporters giving that will make it possible for the museum to support its mission. Every gift size does matter, and the money you give is important. Remember your gift is 100% tax-deductible.

We are very grateful for your support to the 2020 Annual Appeal. Our excellence doesn't just happen; people like you have to make it happen.

Thank you for having an interest in this museum.

Send your support for this museum to:

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Centerville, MA 02632

508-775-0331 - chsm@centervillehistoricalmuseum.org - www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org

memo: Annual Appeal 2020