

CHEQUAQUET LOG

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

THERE ARE A PAIR OF NEW EXHIBITS FINISHED OR NEARLY SO

Come on over to the museum. Of our ten or so exhibits, two have been or are being replaced with exciting new ones. The first, in Clark Lincoln's master bed chamber, recently a little girl's bedroom, is now a woman's sewing room featuring its Elias Howe 1872 double-treadle sewing machine.



This model used two threads which interlocked to form a stitch. After viewing the sewing room, step across the hall and visit the Hollywood film display and learn Centerville's connection to the movie industry. Both rooms are worth a visit.

Downstairs in the Phinney room, where previously had been a well-received undergarment exhibit, the space is being transformed into a 1940's showcase do. With several scenes of the time, the exhibit features a fashion section, which includes evening attire, day wear and furs, a children's scene with clothing as well as toys and books and finally, the military aspect of the Second World War. Accessories as well as hairstyles are enhancing additions to the atmosphere of that special decade.

Speaking of hairdos, take a gander at the mannequins' modish wigs. They are fantastic. The Victory Roll, curled bangs, shoulder length and curled hair, both upswept or loose and neat, was how women wore their hair in the 40's. It is truly amazing how the coming together of hairstyles, dress and accessories takes one back in time so easily.

Think of color films along with radio programs and the late decade bulky television sets, food and gas rationing, Rosie the Riveter, victory gardens, inventions in manufacturing and medicine, the atomic



bomb and music such as jazz and the big bands. Inventive ideas along with the old formed a good blend. Milk, eggs and butter were still delivered to customers' doors. The paper boy still threw the daily rag into the bushes. Nations began to see the might of America's benevolent power across the world, only to face a new threat, communism.



There were many shortages during the war years, but ingenuity played its part. Fashion adapted a utilitarian function. The slenderer suit with slim sleeves and knee-length straight skirt used less material. Shortages in leather and metal called for new challenges to make belts and buckles. Hollywood's influence drove the fashion world in America while London's proximity to the fighting added its own trends. Floral prints, then geometric ones became "in." Trousers covered bare legs. Pleats, squared shoulders and muted colors were the decade's norm.

No exhibits come about by magic. There are ample discussions by our volunteers to choose a display theme. Time is spent finding the right article in the museum's collection that is eye-catching as well as correct to that particular time frame. On occasion, background is changed. For the 1940's show, a color palette was chosen to enhance its fashions. Painting, choosing, stowing away old displays, matching mannequin to outfit, which can be a difficult chore, all these elements must work together in order to entice visitors, help them relive the experience and enjoy all that has been presented in an artful and understandable way. In these fresh exhibits, all the elements have come together nicely, thanks to our volunteers.

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

A VOLUNTEER WHOSE LOVE OF HISTORY BROUGHT HER TO THE MUSEUM

Every one of the museum's antique clothing restorers has a fascinating story to tell. Teresa McAlhany does. On this Tuesday, she is looking forward to a new project.

Previously, Teresa was given the task of finding splits or tears in the silk material of a dress and repairing it by sewing squares of netting behind the splits in order to strengthen the damaged areas. It took forever, she opines, to mend all the garment's fissures, but at last, happily, she has finished the job. "I felt that I used 10,000 pieces of netting on this project," she laughs. Big sigh of relief. A muslin dress with a tambour pattern on it was her next assignment. Lately, she has restored one of the collection's waists with new stays and buttons. It looks stunning.



Always inquisitive, Teresa, ponders, then decides to repair one of the museum's eighteen quilts. It is a log cabin design made in 1858 in Waltham, Massachusetts. It is quite colorful with its strips of cotton carefully fashioned one over the other, each strip a bit larger, using browns and tans and reds and a little green and blue here and there. Each section forms a square and section by section, using variations of the colorful strips, forms the quilt. Any tears, holes and fraying will be carefully repaired to make the quilt exhibit worthy.

Teresa came to the museum when she saw the letter in a local newspaper asking for help to restore museum clothing that was too damaged to display. She says, "I knew I wanted to do this." She has a solid background in the needle arts. She learned to sew from her mother, enjoys embroidery and took a college course in knitting. Recently, she helped another volunteer learn how to knit. Her work is precise, with each stitch neatly placed.

There is a correlation between Teresa's sewing skills and history. "I love history and I like handling old textiles and mending them," she says. "And I also love fashion history." She does not follow many of today's popular trends but tends to forge her own. She is not interested in social media. She describes herself as a minimalist, an environmentalist and a vegan. She is also a reader, not so much fiction, although the classics are a favorite. Which brings us to her love for history in general and two areas of English history in particular. One subject she likes to explore is that of Richard III of England, (1452-1485) who was King of England and Lord of Ireland from 1483 to 1485, the last in line of both the House of York and the Plantagenet dynasty.

Her second historical favorite is that of Harold II (1020-1066), the last Anglo-Saxon king of England. He was a strong ruler and a fine military leader who was killed at the Battle of Hastings fighting to defeat the invading Norman king, William the Conqueror.

This interesting, funny, intelligent personality is Teresa McAlhany, a transplant from Seattle, Washington, to the shores of Cape Cod. She says she has found friends while volunteering at the museum, meaningful work and sums it all up by stating, "I feel welcome here."

Recently, Teresa and her husband decided to return to the Seattle area. With her wonderful skills, her ready smile and her on going work she will be sorely missed.

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

GEORGE AND MARTHA WASHINGTON WERE REAL FASHION DUDES

George and Martha Washington were, in the mid to late 18th century, the leaders of fashion in the American colonies. Even before they were introduced, Martha, whose first husband, Daniel Parke Custis, was a very wealthy plantation owner, wore the best in imported clothing from England. George, himself, was a fashion dandy when not in military uniform.

When George and Martha met, she was a widow with two children. History contends the meeting was instantaneously positive and eight months later the two were wed in a lavish ceremony. It was 1759. Almost every item the pair wore on that day was imported from England. George was in a blue suit with a white silk waistcoat and wore blue buckles on his shoes. His six feet three inch height loomed over his bride who was about five feet tall.



Not to be outdone by George, Martha was resplendent in purple satin heeled shoes, a gold-colored silk damask gown trimmed with lace and a white petticoat with silver threads that peeped through the front of her dress panels, the chic style of the day. Bright jewels hung from her ears and a matching necklace graced her neck. People said this wedding was society's highlight across the colonies that year. By all accounts, the marriage was happy.

It is a little difficult to picture Martha as a slim dark-haired woman since the most famous painting of her is Gilbert Stuart's portrait done in 1796, which shows a plump, white-haired lady who looked like the grandmother she was. During the Revolutionary War years, the couple strove to present the image that they were frugal in their expenses. Stylish clothing and accessories were not available from England, so

everyone had to make do. By custom, plantation owners continued to distribute two outfits of clothing a year to their slaves, plus one pair of shoes. Washington himself and many others changed their buying habits from importing fine silks to growing hemp for linen and using wool from their own sheep. The fabric linsey-woolsey, a blend of linen and wool was the material for every soul in the colonies. Slave women became the makers of clothing, one of which was Ona, a skilled seamstress for Martha Washington, who dressed her for years before she ran away and gained her freedom in New England.

The image of the Washingtons living frugally through difficult times has been found to be just that, an image. The account ledgers from their plantations show both George and Martha spent large sums of money on their elaborate clothing and accessories. After all, Martha was the leader in women's fashion of the day as George was the men's. It was important to portray all was well by sporting the newest styles to the public.

Martha apparently liked to use nature in her patterned gowns. One dress features little nosegays here and there and butterflies, bees, beetles, ants and spiders, with a ribbony pattern throughout. She and her servants also embroidered seashell patterns on material used for couch pillows. One of her favorite books was one on flowers, so perhaps Martha's subtle use of nature in her clothing and other items reflected her love of the great outdoors surrounding her as she gazed from the porch of Mount Vernon to the open view before her.

THOUGHTS FROM OUR WRITER

MUSIC IN THE 1940'S

The decade between 1940 and 1950 was a profound one, musically speaking. So many new types of music were introduced, became popular, hit their stride or made an impact.

One of the largest successes was jazz. Born in smoky nightclubs and small theaters, jazz began its climb in Harlem with new techniques and approaches by unknown talented musicians. Those names included Duke Ellington, Thelonious Monk, Roy Eldridge and Gene Krupa. The age of jazz reached its height throughout the 40's before declining to a beloved niche market for loyal fans.

Many new accomplishments added to general music appreciation during the decade. Mahalia Jackson became the single biggest star in gospel music. Polka music grew in popularity throughout the country and Lawrence Welk recorded his first polka. Square dancing hit the bigtime, influenced by early country music.

Billboard magazine began covering best-selling recordings in the music world. Tommy Dorsey and his band accompanied Frank Sinatra as he sang "I'll Never Smile Again." Sinatra became the first musician to have his own fanbase, bobby soxers. Cubano folk music mixed with jazz and Tejano joined in the mix. Juke boxes appeared in popular eating places.

During the war years military bands came in to being. Glenn Miller joined the Army to modernize its bands. He also helped start an Air force band. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps soon had five bands. The Navy created bands and The Armed Forces Network used radio broadcasts for sending all sorts of music, including country, jazz and others, to Europe.

Jump style music, boogie-woogie and swing were introduced as well as bebop. The music scene was soon awash with all sorts of styles that sped through the nation as well as abroad. Nashville and its Grand Ole Opry gained wide audiences. It sent Ernest Tubbs and his country band to perform at Carnegie Hall, a first. Billy Eckstine became the first black vocalist on network radio with his hit "Skylark." Even the German song "Lili Marleen," recorded by Marlene Dietrich, became one of the most popular songs of the war. Voice of America began its broadcasts.

Movie scores such as "Spellbound" and "The Jungle Book" and "For Whom the Bell Tolls" won audiences. Broadway's "Oklahoma" was hugely popular for its music, staging and story. "Stormy Weather" was the first all-black musical film released, starring Lena Horne, Cab Calloway and Fats Waller. Billy Holiday began her career with the Bill Hines orchestra. Radio programs featuring music were soon sponsored by businesses.

Tobacco strikers in Charleston, South Carolina reworked a song called "We Shall Overcome" to have a more spiritual tone. Hawaiian music spread through the military based in the Pacific. The Berklee College of Music in Boston was the first and only college in the world to train jazz musicians. America invented tape recording technology. "Arthur Godfrey Time" was the first and most popular TV show to introduce amateur entertainers. Steel guitars and then electric guitars made their debuts. Bell's transistor and Columbia's 33-1/3-rpm LP record changed the music world. Nat King Cole's jazz radio picked up sponsors. Tennessee Ernie Ford's boogie songs introduced that style.

All in all, the 1940's was an amazing decade for music and musicians. The array of religious, black, country, swing, jazz, bebop, rhythm and blues, polka, movie and theater, from small venues to large, changed and spread eclectic styles around the world for the enjoyment of all.



E V E N T S A T T H E M U S E U M

A PAINTING CLASS CHALLENGED ITS AMATEURS TO PAINT LIKE VAN GOGH



Everything was laid out with precision on the tables. Containers of paint brushes stood to attention, pure white canvases adorned each painter's spot, color tubes were ready to be squeezed and candy dishes as well as wine glasses were there to bolster energy and relaxation. Vincent van Gogh's world-famously admired painting, *Starry Night*, had been chosen by professional artist, Joyce Frederick, as the evening's project on March 23rd which took place in the museum's Ayling room.

Two hours to throw on a blank canvas lots of blues and white and yellow, whether to imitate, or to render an individual version or to just dab as best one could did not matter. The idea of a get-together of fourteen amateurs who were challenged by the original work's outstanding reputation apparently went quite well. Each amateur artist studied the subject, picked up fat, thin, square, round, whatever, paint brush and got right to it. Some at first may have had little frowns of frustration and despair, but with humor and guidance from the professional right there to give a tip or two and lend some advice, the frown gave way to splashes of color decorating each palette with whatever that painter thought he could do in his or her own way.

Butterflies in the stomach disappeared, qualms lessened and our stalwart amateurs bent to the task. Conversation and questions flowed among the class and teacher and guide Frederick. A few tongue tips poked around upper lips as the paint was rendered



on to the canvas, a few ooh's and aaah's sounded here and there as well as a few darns and cries of "What do I do now?" resonated throughout the room now and then.

This is Frederick's second stab at having a painting class at the museum. The first one, also a resounding success, featured her own original picture of a couple walking through a lush park, raindrops falling from the sky. It was amazing to see how each painter rendered or saw and did on the canvas what was seen in the individual's eye as well what could be done with the skill of the painter. Both evenings were fun and convivial, a happy evening's venture with a personal prize to take home and enjoy on a wall or hide in the basement. Talent may be necessary for a world-renowned artist,

but this latest class went for smiles and a positive approach. Well done.



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website: www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org
email: chsm@centervillehistoricalmuseum.org
address: 513 Main Street, Centerville, MA 02632
Phone: (508) 775- 0331