**HERITAGE HUNTER**

**QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE SHARON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**
**MEMBER OF BAY STATE HISTORICAL LEAGUE**

**DECEMBER MEETING**

Date: Thursday, December 7, 2006  
Time: 6:30 pm  
Place: Parish Hall, First Congregational Church, 29 North Main Street, Sharon

Program: Potluck Supper & Sing-Along to the World War II Songs of the South Pacific

*Ilan Fisher, Program Chair*

Sharon Historical Society  
16 High Street  
Telephone 781-784-9966  
Museum Hours:  
Thursdays, 3-5 p.m.  
Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.  
For Special Appointment call:  
781-784-3275

Quilt Show  
TBA

www.SharonHistoricalSociety.org

**Woman and Weaving**

We were fascinated by Dwight Mac Kerran’s presentation at the last quarterly meeting, especially as it dealt with the role of homemade textiles in 18th and early 19th century America. We wanted to look at some of our local history primary sources.

Mary Beth Norton, in her book *Liberty’s Daughters*, says:

> no household task was more time consuming or more symbolic of the female role than spinning. It was furthermore, a task quintessentially performed by young, single women, hence, the use of the word ‘spinster’ to mean an unmarried female and the phrase ‘the distaff side’ to refer to woman in general. (A distaff is a tool used in spinning to hold the thread, but became an adjective to refer to the female side of the family. Ed.) Farm wives and especially their daughters, spent a large portion of their time, particularly in the winter months, bending over a flax wheel or loom, or walking beside a great wheel, spinning wool.

Deborah Sampson, learned how to spin and weave in Middleboro. Albert Young in *Masquerade, The Life and Times of Deborah Sampson, Continental Soldier,* wrote:  

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*The book is available at the SHS Museum Store*
President’s Message.

The June Barn Sale was a big success, finally, on October 14th! Talk about a rain date. The weather cooperated nicely as did the shopping public. Bob Schofield, event chairman, was pleased that so many members of the Society volunteered leading up to the event and, of course, the day of.

Another session of our Sharing Sharon Memories program was held on November 2nd at the Museum. It featured lots of stories and remembrances from new and old friends.

Mark your calendars for our annual potluck dinner meeting on December 7th. This is sure to be a holiday season highlight as we gather to share a meal and a festive program organized by Program Chair, Ilan Fisher. It will be unique and a lot of fun.

Plans are underway for the Society to host an Antique Quilt Show next Spring. (Probably early April.) We are excited to offer this unique opportunity to view a sampling of historically significant quilt styles.

If you own, or know of a quilt created prior to 1940, or have or know of a quilt with a Sharon connection, we would love to display it. Contact Gary Sullivan (781-784-9914), Ways and Means Chair, with questions or to reserve a spot.

Jan Parr, President
Woman and Weaving (continued)

An experienced weaver could spin several yards a day, which meant that Deborah could make in one day more than the price the town fixed for a man mowing and reaping or doing common labor.

Part of Young's contention is that Deborah became and was an independent person because of her spinning and weaving ability that in turn gave her the spirit to enlist.

Clothwork was an integral part of the Colonial and the early Republican economies. In an economy that was almost cashless, the product of the spinner and weaver would not only be used in the household, it was often used for credit at the local general store.

The wool or the flax (a plant) was produced on the farm. The wife, and as soon as she could pass on the work, her daughters, turned the raw material into thread and then wool fabric and linen. We have two hatchels at the museum. It is a tool that split the fax plant into fibers to be woven into thread.

We have copies of the record books of Benjamin Hewins from 1762-1778 who ran a general store. Here in Sharon, not unlike other rural communities, we have evidence of home clothwork.

Susanna Morse,* for example, received a credit of 5 pounds and 8 shillings from Hewins for a pair of sheets in July of 1763. She also made shirts for Hewins and Joseph Bacon as well as spinning 30 skeins of yarn.

To put the price of her sheets in perspective, in 1763 oil for lamps was 5 shillings a quart, a gallon of molasses was 18 shillings, 8 pence and an ounce of imported tea was 3 shillings, 1 pence. (20 shillings to the pound, 12 pence to the shilling.)

(Continued page 6)

*Born in 1696 to William and Experience Bacon, married Captain Nathaniel Morse 1758 and died in 1809 at the age of 82. From Sharon Vital Statistics

Photo of two hatchels at the museum. The top one, donated by Bill Gardner was owned by Rev. Philip Curtis (PC 1791) and the bottom one is from the original Historical Society's collection dated 1798 with the initials B.H. Could be Benj. Hewins, Benj. Hodges or Benj. Holmes who were alive at that time.

Four foot spinning wheel in Society's collection.
Fall Yard Sale a Success

All that heavy rain we had in June caused the Society to postpone its Annual Barn Sale three times. As you will recall, we held a modified Barn Sale on June 24th during the Annual Strawberry Festival and Leonard Bernstein weekend. The museum was a beautiful gift shop of antiques and collectibles. At the Congregational Church, besides the strawberries there was also a gift table and a baked goods table. (We are grateful to the church for use of their facilities.)

Four months later on October 14th the weatherman finally cooperated and we had a picture-perfect day for the Giant Yard Sale and Open House as part of Sharon Family Week activities.

I would like to personally thank the 54 Society members and a few friends who helped one way or another to make the Yard Sale a success. Some members contributed many hours in preparation of both sales pricing and cleaning items. Some arrived close to 6:30 a.m. and stayed to clean-up after the 2 o'clock closing. Others helped out as best they could.

All of your efforts were greatly appreciated. It was a fun day. We saw many new faces along with those we see annually.

This year the spring Barn Sale and the separate fall Yard Sale total net sales was more or less equal to the last five full Barn Sales. As a result, the Board is considering making the change permanent, that is, a June antiques and collectibles sale and an October yard sale. Your thoughts, both pro and con on this change, would be greatly appreciated.

Bob Schofield, Chairman, Barn Sale and Yard Sale

Activity at the storage shed where some large items were sold.

In Memoriam — Recently Deceased Members:
Sherry (Foster) Reid, Florida
Lucienne Flynn, Sharon
Lucille (Goldstein) Lurie, California
John Hogan, Sharon
Ruth Hersh, Sharon
John Bradford, Maine
The Map of the Twenty-five Divisions

The 1730 map or plot of the Twenty-five Divisions is one of the oldest of many historic maps at the Stoughton Historical Society. This classic green-yellow-blue version of the map was re-copied by Frederick Endicott in 1895. The Stoughton Historical Society also has a copy of the earlier map of the Twelve Divisions of 1726, the year of incorporation of the town of Stoughton, the South Precinct of Dorchester, which at the time included Canton, Sharon, Avon and parts of Foxboro and Walpole. That map has now been reproduced. It covers the northern portion and therefore, the first-settled portion of the Dorchester Purchase, from the “Great Blew Hill” to the land covered on the later map of the Twenty-five Divisions, including the entire 6000 acres set aside for the Indians in the Ponkapog Plantation. For information on how to purchase contact the Stoughton H. S. at 781-344-5456.

Unlike most maps, the Map of the Twenty-five Divisions is aligned with South at the top. The long straight line at the top may help you get your bearings; it is the Old Colony Line between the Massachusetts Bay Colony to the North and Plymouth Bay Colony to the South, and the present boundary between Stoughton, Sharon and Easton. This line was also the approximate boundary between the lands of the Indians to the south, including the Wampanoags and the Massachusetts tribe to the north. The boundaries, however, were fluid, and often it was not clear which

Dues Reminder. If your address label reads 6/06 following your name, it means your dues are past due. For those who are paid up, the address label will say 6/07. Remember dues for the 2006-2007 Society year are due June 1, 2006. Send to: P.O. Box 175, Sharon, MA 02067-0175.

Dues are $15 per year. Life membership is $200. Keep active! Keep dues current! Without your support we cannot offer this newsletter, quarterly programs, timely exhibits, collecting and archiving Sharon’s history, or operating the museum.

Welcome to New Members
Dorothy (Dennen) Sullivan
Hyannis, MA
Bob & Shirley Noyes
Yarmouthport, MA
Mr. & Mrs. Jeffrey Allen
Worcester, MA
Jeanne-Marie (Neault) McCann
Sharon
Victor & Mary Alice Dowdell
Sharon
Bill & Suzanne Heiten (Life)
Sharon
Yuri Levin
Sharon

Indians “owned” any given tract of land, which the English wished to “purchase.”

In the center of the map is Mashapoag Pond (Lake Massapoag). A few inches to the left is the “Road to Easton,” historic Bay Road, which passes close to Dry Pond and leads to three forks...Dwight

Mac Kerron, President Stoughton Historical Society. (Dwight was selling this map at the last meeting after his presentation. It is highly recommended.)
Women and Weaving (continued) The typical family usually bought a couple of quarts of molasses a month as a staple item and 2 quarts of oil would usually last a month based on observable buying patterns. That means Susanna Morse’s sheets would have paid for the oil needs of the family for the year.

The ledger credits Mrs. Hannah Hobbs for 13 1/2 yards of shirting, March 1763. It is interesting that Hannah had her own entry, not under a male name as was usual. Typically the wife would rarely be mentioned by name and only be referred to when she picked something up or dropped something off at the store with reference in Hewins’ ledger “by his wife.”

Hannah had her own account page. However, she did not regularly go herself to the store. Most entries for her were picked up or dropped off by either of the sisters Abigail or Hannah Harlow. Abigail was 16 in 1763 and Hannah was 18. From the record it appears that the girls were the daughters of Abigail and Benjamin Harlow. Abigail was a Hobbs before her marriage and so the young girls were probably nieces.

Although the record does not state it, it appears that Hannah Hobbs was the second wife of and widow of Mathew Hobbs who died January 12, 1762. Hannah Hobbs died 22 years later in 1784. We have no record of her maiden name or where she came from.

Mr. John Smith (1735-1825) was credited in the ledger with “making a loose gown for my wife,” “for spinning a score of linen yard and a score of cotton,” “quilting a coat for my wife,” and “weaving 13 1/2 yards of tow cloth.” (Tow cloth was fabric made from short coarse linen thread.) His wife is mentioned in the ledger, but not named. Sharon Vital Records to 1850 does name a Mary Smith as a widow when she died in 1820 at 78 years of age, but the record does not indicate who her husband was. The dates work. Mary would have been 25 in 1767-68. John would have been 41. So, it might very well be that Mary Smith was the busy person weaving and spinning in 1767 contributing significantly to the buying power of the Smith family.

According to Mary Beth Norton in the 1760’s there was an emphasis from political leaders for women to produce more homespun. A tedious task for the women of the colonies took on high social and political value as the colonies moved to political and economic independence. Women were, as the evidence shows, “fighting” the war for economic independence. David Nelson, Ed.

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