

Quincy

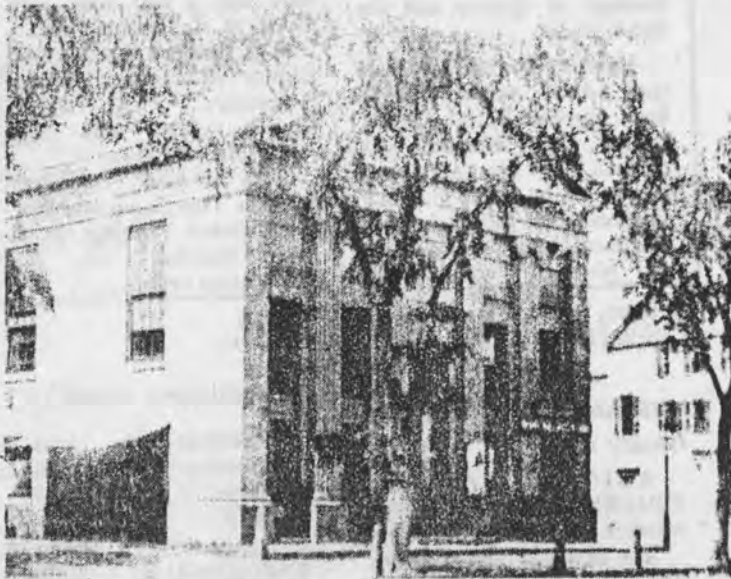
Historical Society

Newsletter

Vol. 3 No. 3

Quincy, Massachusetts

Summer, 1977



Quincy Town Hall - 1875

A REVIEW:

A History Of Fire Protection In The City Of Quincy

Mood, Robert N. A HISTORY OF MUNICIPAL FIRE PROTECTION IN THE CITY OF QUINCY. [Quincy, Mass., 1976], 116 Pages. Illustrated.

Only a professional fireman could have written this book, Robert Mood has done more than write the history of fire protection in the City of Quincy, Massachusetts, he has produced a study which illuminates fire fighting in urban America over the last century. In clear detail, the author has presented an account of the organization of fire fighting and the introduction of fire fighting equipment. This volume deserves a much larger audience than it is likely to receive given the local nature of its sponsorship and

publication. It is another volume in the series funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Bicentennial Grants Program and published in commemoration of the 350th anniversary of the City of Quincy and the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. The author is a member of the Quincy Fire Department.

During my youth in Maine, I witnessed musters of hand tub pumpers for sport and entertainment. Mood has explained the technical operation of this equipment as well as its function in the protection of the community. His account suggests that modern musters are a form of nostalgia for days gone by. This study is illustrated with

[Cont'd on Page 4]

City Hall Use

Hannah French vs. Quincy Inhabitants; 1861

By PAUL D. HAROLD

Judgement for the tenants.

The tenants in this case were the inhabitants of the village of Quincy who were taken to court in 1861 by the heirs of Daniel French.

Seventeen years before, Daniel French donated the land for the site of the new Town Hall [our present City Hall] with the stipulation that the land should never be used for any other purpose except that of a town house.

It was on the basis of this stipulation that the heirs brought their suit, claiming that by renting out space in the Town Hall to private concerns the town had violated the terms of the gift. The renting of space was not a town purpose, and because of this violation, the heirs claimed that the land should revert back to them.

It appeared that the town fathers had built the new stone structure with an eye to the future. They knowingly over-built the hall, with the expectation that as the village of 8,000 grew it would eventually fill the building with administrative and legislative offices of the municipal government.

In the meantime, space in Town Hall was rented out as if it were any other office building on Hancock St.

While the Selectmen's offices were located in the southwest corner of the first floor, the northeast and northwest corners at various times contained a clothing store, a tailoring

establishment, an apothecary shop, a refreshment saloon and the National Mount Wollaston Bank. For a short time a daguerreotype saloon and the Quincy Post Office were also located there.

The rear of the building was taken up by Lyceum Hall, which was used for lectures, theatrical entertainments, dances and exhibitions.

The police lock-up was located in the basement, while the "great hall" occupied the second floor.

Rather than punish the town for the foresightedness of its town fathers, the court found, that in fact the building was being used substantially as a town hall, and that the violations complained of were not sufficient to require a reversion back to the heirs of Daniel French.

In his decision Judge J. Metcalf notes that the foresightedness was both reasonable and legal:

"Prudence would dictate that a building erected to last for centuries should be sufficient for the necessities and conveniences that may arise for a long time to come. In this view, the building may contain rooms not immediately wanted; and within reasonable limits, the town may exercise its own discretion on the subject. It is not contended that the town of Quincy has done anything unreasonable in this respect. The house contains rooms but such as the town will be likely to need for municipal purposes."²

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Quincy 1975-1976: An Epilogue

Time is spent
By committees -
Seeking information
In regard to earlier celebrations;
Envisioning what should be done
In observance
Of two approaching events:
Quincy's 350th Anniversary,
And the Bicentennial.

Many individuals
Volunteer their service;
Business and industry respond;
Publications are determined -
And memorabilia;
Programs initiated,
And a film commissioned
Under Quincy Heritage.

Interests range
From Mount Wollaston
To General Dynamics;
From replicas,
To research;
From restoration,
To open space ...

Student groups participate -
And community organizations;
Senior citizens,
Civic leaders,
And Quincy sons and daughters
Who have "made it to the top".

There is music
And drama
And art;
There are historic tours
And archaeological digs;
Banquets

And parades,
Solemn services
Fireworks
And birthday cakes!

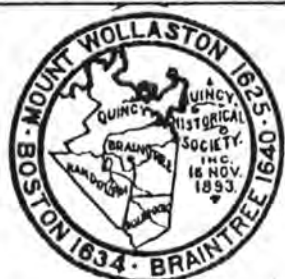
The Adamses
Live again;
John Hancock
General Palmer
And Francis Parker
Walk the paths
They used to know -
In timelessness.

The 350th Anniversary
Is enveloped
In the Bicentennial -
1975
Merges into 1976;
The local becomes national;
And Quincy is confronted
As never before,
With the far-reaching
And unique significance
Of its historic role.

The celebrating is over -
But a renewed awareness
Of the past,
And the impetus of
our involvement
In its observance,
Will affect our lives -
In ways perhaps unforeseen
And unrecognized -
As we face into
The next half century.

MILDRED B. HARRISON

*Written for the Quincy Historical
Society at the request of William
A. O'Connell, President*



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Kathleen T. Mitchell
Editor

William A. O'Connell
Advertising

Quincy Information Center

Summer has brought a new dimension to the Quincy Historical Society's community activities.

With the cooperation of Norfolk County Development and Tourist Council, the historical society has begun the operation of an information center to aid visitors and residents with information relating to the rich historical and cultural heritage of Quincy and the South Shore.

Materials for the center at the Adams Academy have been supplied by the City of Quincy, the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, the Massachusetts Department of Commerce and Development, the National Park Service,

Norfolk County, Plymouth County, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, and the South Shore Chamber of Commerce.

The society also distributes its own materials including the new "Walking Tour of Quincy Center" developed by Doris Oberg and David Day. The tour directs the visitors along a mile and a half walk with stops at six historic sites - Adams National Historic Site, Quincy Homestead, Adams Academy, First Parish Church, City Hall and Hancock Cemetery.

Mary Frizzell, employed through the Comprehensive Employment Training Act, is the director of the information center.

FROM THE MINUTES

By

MRS. HALL B. CARPENTER

January 18, 1933

ABIGAIL ADAMS SQUARE [Do you know where it is?]

The Secretary reported on the action, taken by him, on behalf of the President, Mr. Fred B. Rice, and members of our Society in making protest against changing the name of Adams Square to John Joseph Callahan Square, which had been approved by the City Council.

The result of the protest was to cancel the formal order and pass a new one, that the square at the junction of Independence Avenue, Franklin Street, and President's Avenue, near the Adams Birthplaces, be named

"Abigail Adams Square".

Whenever you hear a membership report, such as this one of June 2, 1977 - Annual Members-915, Sustaining-81, Donor-4, Endowment-3, Life-17, Honorary-1, Student-28, Complimentary-4, Pioneer-7, Pilgrim-8, Patriot-6, Puritan-1, Miscellaneous gifts-3, Total-1,078, have you ever wondered who the one "Honorary" Member is?

From the minutes of April 30, 1937

At a dinner meeting held at Adams Academy, Mayor Burgin complimented the Society upon its important work and told of the extensive work, which is being done, at the City's expense, in the basement of the Adams Academy, finishing a fine room for the use of the Society."

May 25, 1937

"Miss Lane suggested that Mayor Burgin should be made an honorary member of the Society, particularly, in view of the help, which he has given to us; and this was voted. The Secretary was instructed to write to Mayor Burgin, thanking him for his assistance and advising him of this vote."



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Junior Historian Program

Tracing Roots

We are grateful to Harold Crowley and his planning committee which includes Stella Krupka, John Hemphill, John Harrington, Gordon Nelson, Hobart Holly, Richard Riley, Owen della Lucca, Doris Oberg and Lawrence J. Yerdon for establishing the Society's "Junior Historian" program.

Junior Historians carry membership cards which identify them as young people interested in our city's history.

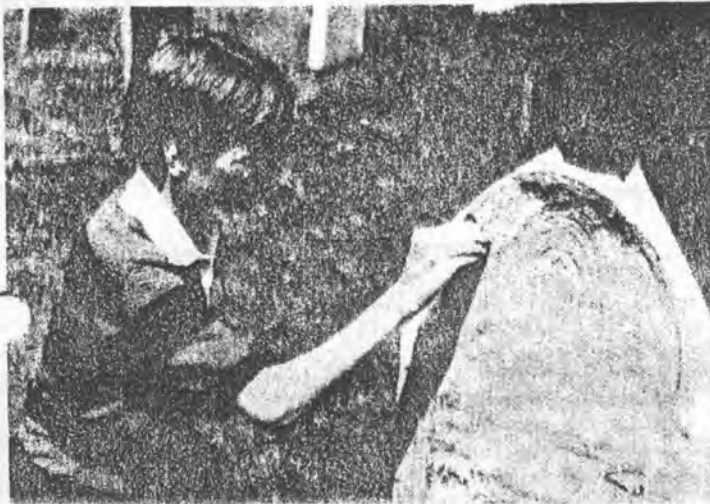
In three group sessions these students traced their "Roots" at our library with the help of the planning committee and Mr. Herbert Holmes, at the office of the City Clerk with the able assistance of John Gillis and at the Hancock and Mount Wollaston Cemeteries.

These programs met with much success. The planning committee is preparing a monthly schedule of events to begin in the Fall.

The Junior Historian Program was set up this year under the direction of Harold Crowley to acquaint youngsters with their past. These pictures show part of that program which took place in Hancock Cemetery and the Crypt at the Church of the Presidents.



Richard Riley, left, and Gordon Nelson guide participants at the receiving tomb at Hancock Cemetery.



Kevin Wood finds the stone of Benjamin Dodge [died 1837] both a work of art and a piece of history.



Owen Dela Lucca explains the past of the Church of the Presidents in the burial crypt of the Adamses.



Brian Garity rubs a gravestone as Doris Oberg and Kevin Wood discuss the day with the group's bus driver.



Careful listening to Owen Dela Lucca.

[Above Photos by Doris Oberg]

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[Above Photos by Lawrence Yerdon]

We Must Take Steps To Save The Birthplaces

[Editor's Note: At the request of the Board of Directors, President William O'Connell drafted this letter which has been sent to Mayor Joseph J. LaRaia. Copies were sent to members of the City Council, Senator Edward Brooke, Senator Edward Kennedy, Representative James Burke, Mr. Thomas B. Adams, The Quincy news media and the Historic Commission. This letter details the Society's concern for the preservation of the Birthplaces of the Adams'.]

June 13, 1977

Mayor Joseph J. LaRaia
Quincy City Hall
1305 Hancock Street
Quincy, Massachusetts 02169

Dear Mayor LaRaia:

The Quincy Historical Society has been actively involved with the Adams Birthplaces since their restoration in the late nineteenth century. Since 1897 the historical society has furnished and administered the interpretative program of the John Quincy Adams birthplace, and the John Adams birthplace since 1951. The future of these historic sites of national importance is of great interest to the society.

Three areas are of particular concern. Specifications for the preservation of the structural integrity of the birthplaces were made in July of 1975 by the consultant service of the Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities. Specific actions necessary for immediate improvements and long-term preservation were outlined in this report. As of this writing, two years later, the recommended actions have seemingly been ignored. The structural problems grow worse with every change in season and with every visitor to these historic homes.

The lack of adequate fire and burglar detection equipment leaves the houses vulnerable to both natural and man-made disaster. To make no effort to protect these buildings against vandalism and the inevitable damage from their urban environment is indefensible.

The general maintenance and appearance of the birthplaces has deteriorated as the city's responsibility for care has been lost in the shuffle of establishment and reorganization of agencies with history related responsibilities.

In recent years the Quincy Historical Society has expressed its concern to a number of city agencies - Quincy Heritage, Quincy Historic Commission and City Council Committee on Historic Places - and various city officials, all with little result. The society feels it is necessary to once again reinforce that immediate steps must be taken to stop the rapid deterioration of these buildings and to properly preserve what is of great importance to the city and nation. We hope that you appreciate that the present situation is critical and that immediate action is of utmost importance.

Sincerely,

William A. O'Connell
President, Quincy Historical Society

Hannah French Vs. Inhabitants Of Quincy; 1861

[Cont'd from Page 1]

As far as the heirs argument that the building could be used only for town purposes, the judge stated that such a requirement would be unreasonably strict:

"To hold that any use of any part of the building except for the transaction of the business of the town is illegal, would exclude from the hall meetings of political parties, agricultural societies and conventions of every kind, and would be unreasonably strict."³

If in the future the City of Quincy decided to build a new City Hall and abandon the present site, the question remains as to what rights the heirs of Daniel French would have at that point.

As late as 1934 an heir of Daniel French attempted to have the gift of land to the city declared void when the city

allowed Sam Gray, a blind newsdealer to operate a stand next to City Hall.⁴

[Paul D. Harold is a member of the Quincy City Council, an attorney and a former member of the society's Board of Curators]

FOOTNOTES

1. The building committee included Daniel Baxter, Benjamin Page, James Newcomb, John Souther, George Viezie, Solomon Willard, Henry Wood, George W. Beale, William Torrey, Abel Wright, Thompson Baxter, Levi G. Folsom, Ebenezer Jewett, Jonathan Jameson and John A. Simpson.

2. Massachusetts S.J.C. October 1861

3. Ibid

4. Quincy Patriot Ledger, 1934.

A History Of Fire Protection In The City Of Quincy

[Cont'd from Page 1]

excellent pictures of the equipment which the author discusses. Mood has the ability to describe so graphically than any layman can visualize the story which he tells.

The author has researched thoroughly the background for this book. He has had access to the records of the early Quincy Engine Companies as well as the Quincy Fire Department. He has combed the files of local newspapers, gained access to private collections of records concerning fire fighting in Quincy, and has conducted many interviews in the course of his research. He has gone beyond Quincy to study the history of the Boston Fire Department. His research has been exhaustive and the result is the definitive history of his subject.

Newspaper accounts have been used to give color to events involving fire fighting in Quincy. The author discusses the establishment of fire stations throughout the city. He mentions assistance both given and received by Quincy fire fighters in battling conflagrations. Although Mood

makes no attempt to compare fire fighting in Quincy with other American cities, the reader has the feeling that this is a representative account. Quincy has always kept up with the latest developments in equipment and has measured its performance against national standards. The author's pride in his profession projects a sense of drama into this account.

Drawing upon the earliest town records, Mood begins with notes on "Fire Fighting in Old Braintree, 1630-1792". He traces the history of fire fighting from the earliest settlement to 1975. There are colorful chapters on the hand engine companies, steamers, hose wagons and even modern rescue trucks. The author discusses the sources of water, systems of water supply, and fire alarm systems. Fire fighting "buffs" will be thrilled reading this story and citizens of Quincy will feel a sense of pride. An outstanding work of history written by very talented amateur historian, this book stands as a model of its genre.

JAMES R. CAMERON