



THE NURSE HOMESTEAD

Newsletter of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead Preservation Society • SUMMER 2005

VOLUME XXIX • NUMBER I
INSIDE THIS ISSUE —

The Great Wheel 1
Step up and HELP 2
2005 board of directors 2
What's new in the Endecott Shop ... 3
The Nurse Cemetery 3
First impressions 4
The president's message 5
Annual dues drive 5
Strawberry Festival back panel

The Great Wheel

By Martha Driscoll

Many of us involved in living history completely understand the work and time put into making clothing by hand. But even those of us who make period clothing sometimes forget that every thread in our ancestors clothing, prior to the industrial revolution, was spun by hand on a spinning wheel.

Wool was one of the most common fibers in the 17th and 18th centuries. Grown locally on sheep that also provided a family with food, wool was spun at home on a spinning wheel designed to create a great amount of twist for a small amount of effort. These wheels we call Great Wheels or Walking Wheels, and with a wheel diameter of 4 feet and an overall length of close to 6 feet, these wheels occupied a considerable percentage of a room that was also used for cooking, eating, and sleeping.

The Great Wheel employs a simple design. A short length of yarn attached to a spindle spirals up and off the end of the spindle and into the spinner's hand. As the spinner turns the large wheel, the spindle and yarn spin. The spinner holds a supply of wool and allows the twist from the spinning yarn to grab the loose fibers, creating a continuous length of yarn. The spinner extends her arm as the yarn grows, and can even walk a step or two away from the wheel, but must eventually wind the new yarn onto the spindle.

The wheel is very large because, unlike a flax wheel that uses a foot treadle to keep the wheel spinning, the Great Wheel is operated only by the spinner's hand. A quarter turn of the wheel creates enough twist to spin a length of yarn. In fact,



RNH curator Niamh Dolan stands at the Great Wheel in the bedchamber of the Nurse Homestead.

one complete revolution of the large wheel rotates the spindle about 350 times, which is enough twist to create two yards of yarn!

I have a great wheel that is close to 200 years old, and its steel spindle has a deep groove worn into the end. The groove is a short spiral illustrating the path that many miles of wool traveled on its way to becoming yarn and ultimately woven cloth and clothing. It's a physical reminder that this wheel was an essential tool in cloth production.



the Rebecca Nurse Homestead
 Preservation Society

The Rebecca Nurse Homestead Preservation Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation, conservation, and programming of the Nurse Homestead, a 27-acre historic site in Danvers, Massachusetts.

The Rebecca Nurse Homestead
 149 Pine Street
 Danvers, Massachusetts 01923
 978-774-8799
 www.rebeccanurse.org

Hours of operation:
June 15 through Labor Day
 Every day Noon to 4:30 PM
September and October
 Sat. and Sun. Noon to 4:30 PM

Newsletter editor: Don Hayes
 Design and layout: Tom Macy

An opportunity to step up, take action, and help!

By Bill Clemens

How many times have you read in the articles that I submit to each edition of this newsletter, that those of us who manage and operate the Homestead would love to have members of the Preservation Society come forward and volunteer to help us



Help the Nurse Homestead come alive at the Strawberry Festival. You don't have to dress like the people shown in the picture above.

with our efforts? And how many of you may have thought volunteering might entail more of a commitment than your busy schedule would allow? Well I have an offer that will only necessitate several hours of one day and would greatly contribute to the Homestead.

As noted elsewhere in this issue, our annual fundraising event, the Colonial Field Day and Muster, will be held on Saturday, June 25th. This one day activity brings in roughly half of the money we raise each year to help support the property. And to carry off this event, we need to call on every Danvers Alarm List Company member, as well as friends and relatives, to lend a hand. I would like to request that any Preservation Society member, male or female – we can find work for everyone who

is willing – to contact us and lend your energies to the cause. We need bodies to hull strawberries and help with setup on Friday, June 24th for five to six hours. We can also use volunteers to help with the strawberry shortcakes, tavern and other tasks on Saturday. It only requires a few hours of your time for one or two days, whatever you can manage, but it means a great deal to us.

So if you're interested contact either Laura Abraham-Miller (978-388-9298) or me (978-777-3423) to get more information on specific jobs and times or to just step up and say "I'll be there to help." The Homestead will benefit from your efforts, you get to meet and work with a really great group of people and at the end of the day you'll have the satisfaction in knowing that your efforts were deeply appreciated.

Danvers Alarm List Co. Inc. elects 2005 board of directors

Bill Clemens, president

Bill is a charter member of DALCO with 31 years of continuous active participation. Bill served as clerk/treasurer from 1975 to 2000 and as president from 2000 to present. Outside of DALCO, Bill is the CFO of H&H Propeller Shop in Salem. He resides in Danvers with his wife and two children.

Henry Rutkowski, vice president

Henry has been a continuous active member since 1975. In 1980 he was elected Director of Buildings and 2nd lieutenant, and in 2002 became Vice President and 1st lieutenant. Henry is the Facilities Master Electrician for the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. He resides in Salem with his wife and three children.

Martha Driscoll, clerk

Martha is a life-long resident of Danvers and DALCO's first woman board officer. A spinner, weaver, and knitter, she brings a love of history and traditional crafts to the organization. Martha is the Computer Systems Manager for the North of Boston Library Exchange and resides with husband Jim and two daughters.

Bill Quinlan, treasurer

Bill has been a member of DALCO since 1998. He is currently the treasurer and has held this position for several years. Outside of DALCO, Bill works for Bank of America. He recently put his organizational talents to work for DALCO by facilitating a goal-setting

retreat this winter. Bill resides in Reading with his wife and two children.

Laura Abraham-Miller, director-at-large

Laura has been a member of DALCO for three years. She has served in event planning and sales capacities for such institutions as The House of the Seven Gables, Boston Museum of Science, and the Peabody Essex Museum. Laura lives in Amesbury, Mass., with her husband and daughter – and is expecting baby number two.

Donald Hayes, director-at-large

Don joined the Company in 1974 and served as sergeant and then 2nd lieutenant during the last five years. He teaches US and world history at Lowell High School. He served as a director and president of his home town historical society in his 20's and has been active as an officer or board member of several historical organizations during the past 30 years. He has three daughters who tolerate their father's penchant for history with good humor.

Thomas Macy, director-at-large

Tom has been reenacting since 1975. He has authored two books (his book on the first naval battle of the Revolution, *The Hannah and the Nautilus*, is available in the Endecott Shop), and has lectured at numerous museums and historical societies. In his free time, Tom runs the advertising and promotions departments for Bedford/St. Martin's publishing. He has two children and resides in Salem.

John Mroszczyk, director-at-large

John is a fairly new member of DALCO, joining in early 2004. He is a consulting engineer, and has done work in the automobile technology industry for Bosch, Engelhard, and Ford. John has previously served as president and executive board member for the Danvers Little League, Danvers Babe Ruth, and Danvers High Football Boosters. He lives in Danvers with his wife and three children.

Robert Osgood, director-at-large

Bob is the very first "founding member" of DALCO, having originated the idea of recreating a Danvers militia company in 1974. Bob is technically retired after 30 years with the Danvers Fire Department, but remains busy as caretaker and resident guide at the Nurse Homestead, where he and wife Josie have lived for 12 years. Bob has also served on the Danvers Conservation Commission.

Victoria Rebal, director-at-large

Victoria joined DALCO in the Fall of 2002. This is the beginning of her second year serving as a director. A lifelong resident of Danvers, Victoria has had a strong interest in history and historical interpretation for over seven years. This May, Victoria will graduate from Salem State College with honors to pursue a career in teaching.



The Endecott Shop: Only the select are sold!

By Glenn Mairo, Endecott Shop manager

I take great pride in the selection of items that the Endecott Shop carries. Our old New England attitude is that all items must be appropriate for a 17th Century historic site and be of excellent quality and value. Also, we carry a wonderfully balanced selection of books relating to the Witchcraft Hysteria of 1692.

New book

A splendid addition to a very select list of "must read" books on the events of 1692 appeared in 2002. Marilynne K. Roach's *The Salem Witch Trials*, is a comprehensive, yet highly readable day-by-day chronicle of the events of not only 1692, but of the events leading up to that fateful year, and the events of the years following it as the horrors committed in Essex County "mutated into folklore and family tradition." I find myself going back to this terrific book time and time again. And now, *The Salem Witch Trials* is available at the Endecott Shop in paperback for only \$22.95 each.

New video

New for this 2005 season is the PBS Home Video version of "Three Sovereigns for Sarah." This 2 tape video, reasonably priced at \$29.98, is available on our website rebeccanurse.org or in person (the old-fashioned way!) at the Endecott Shop. We hope to offer a DVD version of this important, historically accurate movie in the near future.

Parisian import from the original manufacturer

Being highly selective as to which product lines are carried at the Endecott Shop, I have turned down dozens of items over the years. A perfect match for the shop this year is the Paris based firm, J. Herbin. Founded in 1670, J. Herbin produces the finest glass pens and historic inks in the world. We have looked at several lines of inks over the past two years, but found most to be of poor quality and value. With J. Herbin, we now are pleased to offer writing products for not only the discerning letter writer, but for the historically minded individual. One very special ink that we offer (sorry - due to fragility, inks and pens are ONLY available in person at the Endecott Shop) is called "Louis XIV." This ink is identical to the "bleu royal" ink pre-

pared by J. Herbin for the "Sun King," Louis XIV. This ink is for nibs and glass or quill pens only, and not for fountain (new-fangled) pens. J. Herbin glass pens come in two sizes, assorted colors, and are superb writing instruments. I have used a J. Herbin glass pen for 2 years with outstanding results. There is a feeling of purpose and deliberation that one feels when writing with a dip style pen and ink that no word processor or computer can ever match!

As always, all profits after costs go directly into the upkeep and programming of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead. And, as always, we are most grateful for your continued patronage of the Endecott Shop.



The new J. Herbin ink and glass pens, now available in the Endecott Shop... a great holiday gift idea!

Around the Homestead — Highlights of our historic property

While the Nurse House itself rightly gets most of the attention, the Homestead also is fortunate to have other historic structures as well. In this edition of the Homestead newsletter, we're taking a closer look at Nurse Cemetery.

The ancient Nurse family graveyard is nestled among tall pine trees on the west side of the property. Typical of early New England farms, small plots of land were often set aside to bury family dead. Generations of families are buried here, many in unmarked, or simple fieldstone-marked graves. Among the families represented are Nurse, Putnam, and Tarbell. The oldest portion of the graveyard appears to be the side closest to the road. It was likely that Rebecca Nurse was secretly buried here by her family, who brought her body back from Gallows Hill following her execution on July 19, 1692.

On July 30, 1885, the Nurse family ded-

icated the obelisk-shaped granite memorial to Rebecca's memory. The monument includes a sentiment written by famed poet, John Greenleaf Whittier:

In August 1992, the remains of another of the 1692 Witchcraft victims, George Jacobs, Sr., were also laid to rest here following a dignified ceremony in the reproduction Salem Village Meetinghouse. The remains had been unearthed in the 1950's at the former Jacobs property. Resting in quiet storage for many years, they were buried by the Danvers Alarm List Company and Salem Village Witchcraft Tercentennial Committee of Danvers, as one of several projects undertaken during the 300th anniversary observation of the witchcraft period. Jacobs' gravestone includes as an epitaph the brave words uttered by at his examination. "Well! Burn me or hang me but I'll stand in the truth of Christ."



What an impression the Homestead made!

By Ruth Canonico

Editor's Note: Ruth is our newest member having joined this month. A folklorist and storyteller by profession, Ruth tells us how the Rebecca Nurse Homestead itself caused her to join DALCO

What brings a newcomer to the Rebecca Nurse Homestead? In my case, coming as I did from a state of general ignorance of the existence of this beautifully situated and preserved historical site, it was through a combination of friendly invitation and perhaps a deeper life long interest in the fate of those 17th century women of Salem Village accused of witchcraft.

In the first instance, it all began with my noticing a small zip-lock bag containing red and blue bits of fabric and thread in the possession of a church choir member of First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church, Chelmsford. "What do you have in there?" I innocently asked one sunny February morning during coffee social hour after service. "Oh this? I am hand-sewing my uniform for the reenactment company to which I belong. I bring it with me to work on in-between choir warm up and the start of the service, to pass the time," he answered. My curiosity was definitely peaked! Hand-sewn uniform? Reenacting what exactly? There followed an introduction to my friend's participation in the Danvers Alarm List Company of American Revolutionary Reenactors. "Where can I see this presented?" I inquired. "Well, we have a Strawberry Festival in June in Danvers you might like to visit." The idea of eating strawberries and shortcake in a pleasant field one afternoon in early summer appealed to me. As yet, I had no idea that the location would be the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, or that this company was linked to its preservation.

Over the ensuing weeks of social hour conversations, I found out that there was a website for The Rebecca Nurse Homestead and made it a point to investigate it. I can still recall my confusion when I found the RNHPS website to see "Danvers Alarm List Company" in the dual noted homepage. I had no idea why a home alarm security system was connected to this historic site! Fortunately, 2nd Lt. Don Hayes soon cleared up my confusion!

The morning of the appointed day for the Strawberry Festival arrived along with a pretty persistent rainfall! Not to be discour-

aged, I decided to wait until the afternoon to drive to Danvers. Clutching my Map Quest guide, I found my way to a road that passed by Liberty Tree Mall, then made my way up Pine Street to find the rustic sign for the Rebecca Nurse Homestead. Sunshine and a hazy moist heat had replaced the muggy rain as I pulled up to the parking area.

"Not since I had lived in England had I felt such a kinship with a landscape and the historic house and buildings around me."

Two men in knee britches, homespun-looking shirts and waistcoats greeted me at the entrance gate as I let my gaze follow along the split log zigzag fencing along a lush green field graced by fine tall trees. Ponies ambled in a penned field to my right and tables and craft stalls and a number of small tents nestled along the road and field to my left. Women in full skirts, aprons, laced bodices and full-sleeved blouses and caps and more men in their colonial clothing graced my view. But, it was the house that completely enthralled me! "Love at first sight," would be my honest assessment of that first view of the Rebecca Nurse House.



I felt as if I had entered a time bending dream. Not since I had lived in England had I felt such a kinship with a landscape and the historic house and buildings around me! I found a seat on the well near the house and sat taking in the view. A horse drawn cart invited visitors to circumnavigate the lower field and burial ground below. People from 21st and 18th centuries mingled together taking refreshments, entering the house, barn, or meeting house or

simply walking across the fields to pet the ponies, chat, or purchase some item from the vendors. The atmosphere was relaxed and at the same time pleasantly festive.

My friend came into view. I waited a moment and then entered the world of reenactment my mind full of questions. I was treated to introductions to other DALCO members, and on asking about the loading and use of muskets. Lt. Hayes brought me to the recruitment table where he took a young recruit through his musket loading drill. All that while a young colonial woman seated by the table was hand sewing a piece of her new dress. After perusing the craft stalls and sifting through the fine array of photo-cards of previous DALCO and RNHPS events, I took my leave to ride the cart over to the memorial burial site of Rebecca Nurse.

I took in the Nurse house next, noting the herb garden before entering at the kitchen. Admiring the array of herbs drying over the hearth, I paused to talk to a spinner at her wheel before leaving the great hall to view the grove of trees at the front of the house. It was there that all my memories of Salem witch trials filtered back into my mind. While attending the University of Kentucky in Lexington I saw their summer Repertory Theatre Company perform "The Crucible." I recalled the power of their portrayal of that fearful episode in Puritan American history as I took in the peaceful setting of this homestead. I remembered how fascinated and horrified I had been reading about the Salem Witch Trials in my High School years.

Before I left the Strawberry Festival last summer, I visited the meeting house and sat on one of the back benches to prepare myself to reenter the 21st century and my journey back to Lowell. I knew then as I still do now, that my connection to this spectacular historical site would become more central to my life in the coming months and possibly years. I joined the RNHPS that summer and continue to research the history of Rebecca Nurse from sources available in the Endecott Shop at the Homestead, and from my fellow members of the Danvers Alarm List Company, which I have recently joined.

The president's message: a view from the top

By Bill Clemens

Public corporations, those whose stock trades on an SEC controlled exchange, measure their success by how large the positive bottom line number grows and the steady increase in the stock price. They can also have complex corporate structures and impressive brick and mortar facilities. These are all well known attributes by your average John Q. Public and not very mysterious. But ask Mr. Public to explain how a not-for-profit entity works and I'm pretty sure all you'll get is a very quizzical look. For some reason once you start discussing a corporation whose goal is not making a profit, it seems many think that black magic and witchcraft must be present to allow continued existence.

I assure you this is not the case. Not-for-profits have corporate officers, boards of directors, tangible physical assets and many of the same rules and regulations that publicly traded businesses have to adhere to. Charitable organizations just have to measure success and growth by different methods. We also have to make a "profit," we just

call it by a different name, i.e. increased fund balances. Believe me, if the monetary inflows don't exceed outflows most of the time, the not-for-profit will go the same way as any bankrupt corporation.

So how does Danvers Alarm List Company measure success and growth? This question was discussed at our first all-day, corporate strategy meeting held recently in Salem. We tossed around ideas and concepts that would have made any Wall Street tycoon feel very comfortable. We eventually decided that the increased satisfaction of the visitors' experience while at the Homestead is one goal. We would also like to see an increase in the number of Preservation Society memberships, as well as better retention of and upgrades in donation levels by existing members. One additional goal is to get Society members more actively involved with us because more participation brings more success in the continued development of the organization.

And to this end I would like to acknowledge several recent successes that validated

our efforts over the last year to ensure that you, our members, are getting a valuable and perceptible return on your support. Dan Lohnes of Beverly, longtime member and supporter made a most generous four digit donation towards upgrading the protection technology at the Homestead. Ellie Ross of Danvers, also a long time member contributed our first donation towards defraying newsletter costs. The Carlsons of Clifton Park, NY also gave a generous check to our general fund. And a new corporate sponsor, Journeyman Press of Newburyport, printed 10,000 of our new advertising brochures free of charge. I thank all the members that contribute that extra support as well as every member that continually sends in their yearly dues. It all helps to positively impact our bottom line, which means the Homestead can be maintained and preserved for years to come.

Bill Clemens, President—Rebecca Nurse Homestead
978-777-3423
president@rebeccanurse.org



It's time again... Time to make sure that thousands of children and adults can visit our wonderful historic site, time to keep the Homestead a vital part of the community and region, time to continue the growth that the Rebecca Nurse Homestead is enjoying.



The
Rebecca Nurse Homestead
Preservation Society

2005 Membership Renewal

Individual: \$15.00 Family: \$20.00 Supporting: \$50.00 Donor: \$75.00 Patron: \$100

Please make your check payable to **The Danvers Alarm List Co. Inc.** Clip this form out of the newsletter, and mail with your check to: The Rebecca Nurse Homestead, 149 Pine Street, Danvers MA 01923-2693. THANK YOU.

Name _____

Address _____

City or Town _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Email address (Confidential. We don't share this with anyone) _____

www.rebeccanurse.org

Danvers, Massachusetts 01923

149 Pine Street

The Rebecca Nurse Homestead Preservation Society



THE REBECCA NURSE HOMESTEAD

Strawberry Festival

AND COLONIAL FIELD DAY

Our annual Colonial Field Day provides fun for the whole family and an income to support the programs and preservation at the Nurse House.

Come and enjoy yourself while making it possible for the Rebecca Nurse Homestead to continue to: provide beautiful open space for the Town of Danvers; educate people from all over the country about the witchcraft scare of 1692, give visitors an experience that links them to the Colonial Period of our history.

ADMISSION - voluntary donation • FREE PARKING

COME JOIN THE FUN

Saturday, June 25

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Strawberry Shortcake - 11:00 AM to sell-out

Craft Fair - crafts, plants, and goods

Open House - spinning in the Great Hall

**Story telling for children of all ages
in the Meeting House**

18th Century Tavern to satisfy your appetite

18th Century encampment display

Live Music

Pony Rides - Hay Wagon Rides

Museum Shop