



# THE NURSE HOMESTEAD

Newsletter of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead Preservation Society • SPRING 2005

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## Off season at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead



*The last rays of a setting winter sun cast shadows on the west side of the Nurse House.*



*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](http://www.rebeccanurse.org)

Hours of operation:  
**June 15 through Labor Day**  
 Tues. through Sun. 1 PM to 4:30 PM  
**September and October**  
 Sat. and Sun. 1 PM to 4:30 PM

At this time of year the level of activity at the Homestead slows to the pace of the long-passed agricultural times of New England. At night, the moonlight flows over the snow frosted fields of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead. The landscape is quiet except for the breeze passing through the bare tree branches or playing among the needles of the pine trees. The lights from the overseer's apartment cast a shadow of squares on the snow. In daylight the only activity that can be seen are the winter birds flying about looking for that elusive seed hiding in a winter landscape. The fence along the drive serves only to separate one

snow covered field from another as the wind pushes and swirls snowflakes across them.

Human activity interrupts this peaceful scene when the snowplow clears the drive so Bob and Josie Osgood can travel off the site. Or, on alternate Tuesdays the members of the Danvers Alarm List Company gather to plan and prepare for another season.

While activities cease at the Homestead, the work does not stop. Much has to be done to maintain the buildings and grounds and prepare for a new season. This issue brings you a little about the individuals who are responsible for the existence and operation of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead.

# A thankful reflection

by Jackson Tingle

*Editor's Note: Militiaman Jackson Tingle came to be a member of the company in a unique way by working at the Nurse house as a boy and growing into it. He will be graduating from the University of New Hampshire in May with a degree in History. These are his thoughts on his life as he grew up at the Nurse House.*

Starting at a very young age, we are pulled in many different directions. As we grow, new interests emerge and supersede past priorities. Between soccer practices, music rehearsals, art lessons, and any of the numerous other activities available to the preteen and teenage student, often times one can feel a bit unhinged – the proverbial ship without a captain. Without such an anchor we fly down the myriad paths at our feet, each leading to another convoluted crossroads. Thankfully, in my life I have been blessed with an anchor upon which to adhere: The Rebecca Nurse Homestead.

My involvement at the Nurse Homestead began quite unintentionally. Through the family of a friend, I began my involvement with The Danvers Alarm List Company and subsequently was hired at the Nurse Homestead to aid the caretaker, and resident taskmaster, Bob Osgood. This was in the summer following my 7th Grade year. Now, well into my senior year in college, I am beginning to take account of the role the Homestead played in my life.

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*"Thankfully, in my life I have been blessed with an anchor upon which to adhere: The Rebecca Nurse Homestead."*

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Entering the workforce at such a young age, by today's standards, gave me a huge sense of pride and raised my self-esteem exponentially. As a very shy youth, working with my hands and earning money while most of my friends sat at home made me feel unique and more mature. Of course, never having used a lawn mower, weed-whacker, chain saw, rototiller, or bow saw meant I had a lot to learn before I could claim any expertise. I learned a lot under the guidance and tutelage of Mr. Osgood. His patience and understanding helped instill in me a sense of self-worth and respect that was otherwise lacking. Now don't get me wrong, Bob is not and never was a shrinking violet; he drove me pretty hard sometimes but never expected anything unreasonable from me and always knew when to let up. It was this balance that proved to me that I did have value and that I was good at something.

Though many gifts have been afforded me

because of my involvement with the Homestead, I can honestly say the most valuable of them all is the work ethic instilled upon me by my once boss and constant friend, Bob. His insistence upon excellence taught me to take pride in my work and developed in me a revulsion for "cut corners" and "quick fixes". Along with the strong work ethic, a great value for physical labor began to sprout. Now, I often feel far more respect for the artisans and craftsmen who create and cultivate with their hands over those who broker and manage others. The "pass-the-buck" attitude so common in our modern life now seems an affront to personal dignity and pride.

That same sense of pride has extended far beyond my own work and labors over the years. Studying Danvers' history and the history of our nation has filled me with such respect for our past and the values our country has been founded on. History is a constant presence at the Nurse Homestead – sometimes an overwhelming one – and not only has it shaped how I view the place in which I live, it also gives me a sense of context. I now feel more like a part of the story rather than being the story itself. Not only does this create a sense of humility, it is also reassuring. To see oneself as equal to those who have come before, those in the present, and those who will come after makes me feel we're all in this together.

But let us not just focus on the past, for the future is by far the more interesting. Don't we do this reenactment thing to, in some sense, see where we're going? I have nothing but high hopes for the Nurse Homestead and the Danvers Alarm List Company. With blossoming interest in the community and fresh ideas within the group, I see our organization moving forward with both fervor and vision. Of course, the Homestead is an integral part of who we are as a group and I am proud to speak of my involvement when I look at all the great new changes both accomplished and developing. The future is so difficult to predict, but whatever changes may occur, both good and bad, I will be both constant and enthusiastic in my involvement with the Rebecca Nurse Homestead, now, and in the days to come.



## Who does what at the RNH

by Donald Hayes

I love driving up the dirt driveway to the Nurse Homestead parking area in mid summer. The fields are green and open on both sides with the split rail fence to remind me that the left side field is planted with alfalfa and is not for parking. The dirt road brings me back to an earlier era when roads were not paved and had ruts and depressions to bounce the occupants of any vehicle traveling on it. The lush green growth at the ends of the fields shield me from the modern day and the view ahead is unrestricted to the back of the property where the cemetery cradles its occupants. The property always looks neat and well cared for.

Most responsible for and dedicated to the task of caring for the property is Bob Osgood, an original founder of the Danvers Alarm List Company and current resident overseer. Bob often enlists the help of others and on this particular day his grandson, Jeremy aged 24, was his assistant. When asked if he does all this acreage alone, Bob quickly responded, "No. Dave McKenna does the lawn mowing and the plowing and anything else we ask." Dave is a Danvers native and an early member of the Alarm List Company. His business has the equipment needed to mow and move snow. Bob added that the major work is hired or donated by volunteers. The Alarm List Company usually has a cleanup day in the spring to take care of the winter debris.

"How is the cemetery cared for?" I asked. Bob replied that the interior of the cemetery is cared for by the town except for the plantings around the Nurse Memorial. Bob takes care of those and the immediate outside of the cemetery. The cemetery was legally abandoned when the Rebecca Nurse Memorial

*Continued on next page*



## Clothing makes the difference

by Victoria Rebal

Clothing makes a difference. Imagine yourself thrilled to see a theatre production on Broadway. You find your seat, settle in and as the curtain rises all of the stars of Phantom of the Opera are wearing jeans and tee shirts! It just wouldn't be the same no matter how lovely the singing is.

As reenactors and historical interpreters, the members of the Danvers Alarm List Company strive to illustrate and bring life to the representation of our eighteenth century counterparts, and it's a lot of fun.

Dressing to interpret history is a lot different than an actor would dress to entertain an audience. First off, we don't wear costumes, we wear historical garments that have a lot of research put into the construction. Our clothing doesn't exist to just look good from a distance, we have to put a lot more time into the details; and our clothes are made to be worn. We wear these clothes a lot, over the fire, in the sun, and on the field.

Whether we buy or sew our garments there is a lot to consider. We pile through reproduction catalogues and bolts of fabric searching for fabrics made from natural fibers. Polyester, rayon and nylon didn't exist in the Eighteenth century. We are limited to linen, wool, cotton, silk or some combination of these. Once a suitable fabric is found, what color is it? Does it have an appropriate pattern on it? These are some of the many questions that go into deciding what to wear while reenacting.

These considerations may seem trivial or too much to worry about but many of us enjoy doing the best job we can in our presentation of this time period. So the next time you see one of us, come up close (we don't mind the staring. We are used to it). Ask a question. We love talking! Point out something that you haven't seen before or just noticed. Ask about something you can't see (do you know how much underwear an eighteenth century woman wore)?

Next time I'll share the facts about all of the different pieces of clothing that women wore in the eighteenth century

THE REBECCA NURSE HOMESTEAD

# Strawberry Festival

AND COLONIAL FIELD DAY

## Call for volunteers... Can you help, PLEASE?

WE NEED YOU! Many hands make light work at our upcoming Strawberry Festival in June. This is the one and only fund raising activity we have for the Rebecca Nurse Homestead and it provides up to half our income for the year.

### What kind of help is needed?

- **Hulling strawberries the day before.** This is a sit down job and a social activity as well.
- **Setting up the Balch Tavern in the morning.**
- **Greeting visitors at the gate.**
- **Selling tickets for strawberry shortcake.**
- **Operating the membership and recruitment booth.**
- **Room guide** in the Nurse House to answer questions and keep an eye on the collection.

Please call 978-777-3423 and volunteer. Your time supports all the valuable programming at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead.

**Planning Your Estate?** Please consider including the Rebecca Nurse Homestead Endowment Fund in your estate planning. The Endowment Fund ensures the continued operation of the Homestead for generations to come. Memorial contributions are also encouraged.

For further information please call our RNHPS president Bill Clemens at 978-777-3423 or write to Endowment Fund, Rebecca Nurse Homestead, 149 Pine Street, Danvers, MA 01923.

## Who does what

*continued from page 2*

Association went bankrupt so the interior became the responsibility of the town.

Five people provide the guidance for visitors at the Homestead. Katherine Rutkowski has been a guide for six years, since she was in the 8th grade. "It's a lot of fun," reports this college junior majoring in museum studies. Her father is 1st Lieutenant Henry Rutkowski, showing that a parent's interest can rub off onto the child.

Candice Clemenzi in her second year at Leslie University has also worked as a guide since the 8th grade.

Elizabeth Levenson and Eva Bramesco, both entering 9th grade, are the current junior guides. Elizabeth is studying voice and drama and Eva studies dance.

Katherine Morano teaches first and third level Spanish in Lynn. She has worked here for about eight years and can conduct tours in French or Spanish if the visitors prefer. She enjoys the break from teaching while being a role model for the younger guides.

The Homestead fields are still used for agriculture, as they have been for over three centuries. Dunajski Dairy in Peabody plants hay or alfalfa on the fields and harvests the plants for their use at the dairy. This keeps the fields from growing into a jungle of weeds, keeps the agricultural appearance of the property, and helps a local business continue to operate.

All of this is unseen to the casual visitor who admires the beauty of the grounds and the setting of the buildings. Many hands and many hours of labor keep the Rebecca Nurse Homestead as a jewel in the Town of Danvers.

# A living history sub-culture

By Jill Hayes

(Editor's note: Jill is a history major at Fitchburg State College. Assigned a to prepare a paper on subcultures in the US, she chose her father's "family" of reenactors. Her work explains to us why we reenact.)

From the vantage point of her mini van, a young woman watches two British soldiers as they march along the roadside. In a few minutes their friendly faces appear in her window. "I say Miss; may we commandeer this strange carriage of yours?" "No way," she replies. "You just killed my father." They laugh and mutter "Bloody Whigs," as they continue on their trek to the next event of the day. A little later, the young woman is joined by a man in full Colonial regalia. She puts the van into drive and blasts the air-conditioning. "So Dad, ready to shoot some more lobster backs?"

Many residents of Massachusetts have made the annual pilgrimage to Lexington and Concord to watch the battles of the Revolutionary war reenacted. Something about the recreating of history draws them. They 'boo' the British when they march by in their crisp red uniforms and cheer the motley-dressed colonists. They gaze upon muskets with pointed bayonets and find a nationalistic pride in America's first fight for freedom. Some observers even wish that they could don costumes and join in this adult version of "let's pretend".

The reenactors smile and share their knowledge of colonial times, leaving people to wonder about this enthusiastic crew of history buffs. Why are they so interested in this hobby? Do they have jobs that relate with history? More often than not, the answer is no. These people are just average joes: people that make up everyday American society who share a 'hobby' that seems to be a way of life, and a desire to share all they learn about their passion with the general public.

Danvers Alarm List Company (DALCO) is characteristic of this sort of group. Based at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead in Danvers Massachusetts, it is a group of 18th century reenactors who represent the militia company of Danvers and the surrounding area during the Revolutionary War. They wear reproductions of 18th century clothing, give demonstrations of encampments and reenact the important battles of the war.

Because members come from many different backgrounds, one wonders what draws these people to join a reenactment company. There are several common interests involved. Many members simply enjoy the idea of "stepping into the [history] book." They enjoy feeling as if they have actually stepped back in time, and authenticity is the key to creating the right mood. Some members of the

Company actually sew their own uniforms by hand, after doing careful research on exactly what their clothing should look like. In performing drills, these actors load their guns and perform their maneuverings just as was done in the Revolutionary era. Some reenactors even refer to this as 'time travel', but in a much more tangible form than is commonly found in sci-fi novels. DALCO member Tom Macy expressed the excitement of 'getting it right'; that moment when 1776 and 2005 merge perfectly. Some say that doing research is half the fun. Perfecting their methods and surrounding themselves with history makes it that much easier to imagine themselves back in time, taking their audience with them.

Another aspect that draws this diverse group of people to groups like DALCO is a strong desire to understand their culture. "The history of Boston helps me understand who I am, where I came from, why I think the way I do, why I talk without my 'R's.'" comments Bill Quinlan, the treasurer/Ensign of DALCO. Many wish simply to understand this culture and how it was derived from our founders. Others, like campfollower Laura Miller are simply curious. How did it feel to wear a corset? Or to sleep in an encampment? These are things that can only be satisfied with experience. History teacher Donald Hayes (Second Lieutenant) asks himself, "Where do we come from? How did we get here?" Living history is a way to uncover all the mysteries of the past, and explain how our country came to the status-quo of today.

The most common reason for joining, however, is to have that feeling of camaraderie. Jackson Tingle, a Private in DALCO, compares the connection he feels with other members of the Alarm List with his fraternity at college. Sharing this passion for history with a group of people who feel exactly the same way creates a common bond that ties all of a militia's members together.

A common misconception about reenactment groups is that they are made up exclusively of middle-aged men. This is quite untrue. Women and children (often the wives and children of the militia members) also dress for the occasion. "At any encampment you can see dozens of children running about - using something that hardly any child uses anymore - imagination," says Laura Miller, who brings her own child to events.

Both the men and women get 'in character' and only speak to you as though they were living in their time. The reenactors of DALCO have a list of the original members of the company, so each member takes on the name and job of one of the original members. Ask them anything about what's going on in the Revolution and they will know. After all, they have done enough research on the subject. For Private Eric Brokvist, it is educating the public that draws him into reenacting. Though the lessons they wish to teach may vary somewhat, they all desire the public to learn.



Members of Danvers Alarm List Company at a reenactment of the camp and battle of Yorktown.

Another trait among reenactors is their sense of humor. When asked what their favorite part about living history is, some will answer, "Meeting other deranged people and shooting at them" or as Don Perry suggests, "Dressing up on other days besides Halloween." In all seriousness, however, most reply that the people, the other reenactors, are the best part of all.

When questioned about their membership in organizations like DALCO, most participants plead insanity. Despite the freezing rain, sweltering sun, unforgiving uniforms and leaky tents, colonial reenactors continue to attend events and battles. It is plausible that it would take more than insanity to make these people desire to participate despite the terrible conditions they must endure. With groups like this all over New England, active in rain or shine, we will never have cause to forget the sacrifices of the American Revolution generation.

# A few words from the president...

By Bill Clemens

Communication between the Homestead Management Committee and the Preservation Society membership has been a high priority item for me for a number of years. It has been the driving force behind my obsession to increase the number of issues of the newsletter published each year. And as of this edition, I can say that we have attained our goal to send out four issues to the membership during the past twelve months. And we will strive to continue the regularity of the publication schedule.

This brings me to another problem, noted by some R.N.H.P.S. members, and that the Management Committee is currently reviewing and considering solutions. We have always used a bulk mailing permit for the delivery of the newsletter. This gives us a discount on the cost of mailing although the downside is that we have to do some presorting before the mailing goes to the Post Office. We are in the dark about address problems since undeliverable items are not returned to us,

and there can be long lag times between mailing and delivery. This can be especially bothersome when there is date sensitive information being reported.

One option we have is to just mail everything out first class mail. Of course this is definitely detrimental to our cash situation but when you consider the “cost” of intangible aspects such as lost, undeliverable or delayed mail, is the permit savings a real value? And since we are putting more resources and effort into a quality product, we want to ensure that everyone receives their copy. Another option would be to send out the newsletter electronically, via e-mail, although this may not be feasible if enough members do not have internet access.

Along these lines, when you receive your next issue it will contain the annual dues renewal notices. This year we will be requesting members to provide their e-mail addresses so we can begin compiling that information for future use. If we find that a large number of members do have e-mail

access we may at least be able to send out notices and reminders of the more time sensitive activities and eventually maybe the whole newsletter. Although we exist to relive and commemorate the past, we aren't afraid to use technology to make our efforts easier and more effective.

And finally may I be somewhat bold with a proposal to the membership? There may be some number of members out there who are looking for opportunities or projects to which additional donations can be made. Might I suggest donations to help subsidize the newsletter? If just one or two members would pick one issue a year to underwrite the printing and mailing costs, we would have just that much more money in the coffers that could be directed towards the Homestead itself.

Interested? Write, call or email me and we can discuss amounts and acknowledgments of your generosity.

Bill Clemens  
978-777-3423  
[president@rebeccanurse.org](mailto:president@rebeccanurse.org)

## Patriots quarterback takes aim at DALCO minuteman

*condensed from an article in the Salem News*

To make a touchdown at Gillette Stadium last fall quarterback Tom Brady needed a reference point to aim at. He chose First Lieutenant Henry Rutkowski who was standing in the end zone in his 18th Century clothing. When Brady threw the ball, Henry realized it was coming right at him!

Fortunately, it was caught by another player who made the touchdown.

Why did Tom Brady choose Lt. Rutkowski as his reference point? Better yet, what was Henry doing in the Patriots' end zone in his 18th Century outfit?

Visually, Henry's vertical pinstriped pants stand out from the busy background of the endzone making him a clear reference point to fire a football at. And, the fact that the ball sent by Brady's arm could have reached Henry made his heart race a bit faster.

As soon as the touchdown was completed, the line of minutemen honor guard who call themselves “The End Zone Militia” raised their muskets in salute and celebration of another New

England Patriots success on the field.

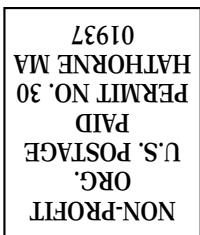
When Bob Kraft bought the New England Patriots he accepted the suggestion made to him by some South Shore reenactors to stand on the sidelines and salute the Patriots touchdowns. The honor guard has grown to about twenty men, with ten on each end of the field. Some minutemen, like Rutkowski, never miss a game and others, like Captain Bill Clemens, attend when they can. In return for their volunteer time, they receive free admittance and the best view on the field. “You can easily see the holes in the line that the players try running through,” Bill Clemens reports. Sometimes they get an up close and personal view of the players such as Christian Fauria and former player Ted Washington.

It isn't all play, of course. The End Zone Militia must be ready at any moment to fire a salute and that can happen quickly. After all, that's why they are called Minutemen!



DALCO members Henry Rutkowski (center) and Bill Quinlan (left) at Gillette Stadium. (Salem News photo, January 17, 2005)





## Events of special note...

### ■ NEW SPECIAL EVENT FOR RNHPS MEMBERS

Come and join with members of the Danvers Alarm List Company (who will be in period costume) at noon on Memorial Day, Monday May 30, to recreate an 18th Century perambulation ceremony of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead property. The perambulation ceremony was partly religious and partly practical. A picnic on the lawn is followed by a brief ceremony in the meetinghouse. The perambulation itself is a walk along the boundaries of the property to identify the markers and to see that all is well. As members of the Preservation Society you can share in the privilege of caring for the Homestead. Come and bring your picnic lunch, enjoy the beauty of the lawns, fields, ponds and the whole setting. And, if you feel adventurous, come and walk the boundaries too.

### ■ DALCO HOSTS "THE BATTLE FOR NEWBURY" MAY 21-25, AT THE LITTLE FARM IN NEWBURY, MA

The Battle for Newbury recreates a typical British raid on the New England coast. Over five hundred British and American Revolutionary War soldiers will camp and skirmish throughout the weekend. Demonstrations include field cooking, tactical maneuvers, drills, and general military camp life. The 17th century manor house will be open both days from 12-4 and have lots of activities for families. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$3 for children and free to *Historic New England* Members. For more information please call 978-462-2634.

### ■ REUBEN KENNISON CEREMONY UNIQUE TO DALCO - RNHPS MEMBERS INVITED TO ATTEND

Each year since 1975, the Danvers Alarm List Company has concluded its Patriots' Day activities with a graveside memorial ceremony at Reuben Kennison's grave in the Leach Burial Ground (Rt. 62 at the Danvers/Beverly line). The ceremony is also attended by Beverly veterans. Interested members should gather at the burial ground at 2PM.

www.rebeccanurse.org  
Danvers, Massachusetts 01923  
149 Pine Street  
The Rebecca Nurse Homestead Preservation Society



## Attend These Events and see the Danvers Alarm List Company in Action!

For details, call 978-774-8799

**April 16 - "Battle Road"** - Minuteman National Historic Park 10AM-4PM

**April 17 - Battle at Jason Russell House,** Massachusetts Ave., Arlington MA 2PM

### **April 18 - Patriots' Day Events**

*Danvers Training Field 7AM*

*Arlington Parade 9AM*

*Reuben Kennison Graveside Ceremony, Leach Burial Ground (Rt. 62, Danvers/Beverly line) 2PM*

**May 21 & 22 - "Battle for Newbury"** sponsored by DALCO at the Little Farm in Newbury MA

### **May 30 - Danvers Memorial Day Events**

*Danvers Memorial Day Parade 9AM*

*RNH Picnic and Perambulation Ceremony Noon*

**June 18 - Mass. Veterans Convention Parade,** Danvers MA 3PM

**June 24 - Strawberry Festival** at the Nurse House

**July 4 - July Fourth Parade,** Manchester MA

**July 9 & 10 - Fort Sewall encampment,** Marblehead MA