



THE NURSE HOMESTEAD

Newsletter of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead Preservation Society • FALL 2006

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They also serve who sit and write grant proposals

You don't have to shoulder a musket or squeeze yourself into a pair of stays to help the Rebecca Nurse Homestead. You don't even have to reach into your wallet—although we're very grateful every time you do. What you can do is dust off your resume and match your skills to our needs.

Grant writing

This is our most immediate and pressing need. The Nurse House needs painting and repairs. The Endecott Shop needs a new roof and floor. Real bathrooms and a "plating area" would enable us to host such activities as corporate events and weddings. Do you have grant-writing experience? Do you have contacts at any of the organizations that grant funds to organizations like ours? The Blake House in Dorchester received \$50,000 from the Massachusetts Historical Society and \$35,000 from the state. There is grant money to be had and we deserve some!

Fund raising

The annual Colonial Field Day and Strawberry Festival has been RNH's main fundraiser. What other events—or fund-raising campaigns—should we undertake? We could use your fund-raising and event-planning expertise.

Marketing

We need a marketing plan that will: increase public awareness of RNH as a historic, educational, and environmental resource; draw us into partnerships with other organizations; and, increase our profitability.



Educational Programming

Are you a teacher, active or retired? Have you had kids in Danvers' or neighboring communities' school systems? Do you have contacts in local school administration? Do you know how to write an elementary school study guide? RNH has enormous potential in this area. Help us expand and improve our educational outreach.

ETC. ...

We also need volunteers to:

- Revamp our standard tour
- Create targeted tours for special groups
- Develop a schedule of living-history demonstrations throughout the tour season
- Implement an ongoing educational program for our tour guides

If you have interests and skills in any of these areas and time to devote to short-term projects with big payoffs for the Homestead, please contact Jackson Tingle at chaloff_13@hotmail.com or 978-771-4479. We hope to hear from you soon!



The Rebecca Nurse Homestead
Preservation Society

The Rebecca Nurse Homestead Preservation Society is dedicated to the preservation and programming of the Nurse Homestead, a 25-acre historic site in Danvers, Massachusetts.

The Rebecca Nurse Homestead
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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

Jackson C. Tingle, *Editorial Director*
Pat Bridgman, *Managing Editor*

Melodies in the meetinghouse

Danvers High School choruses take advantage of the wonderful acoustics of the RNH meetinghouse

by Thera Driscoll, DHS chorus member and DALC member

On Saturday, May 20, the combined choruses of Danvers High School assembled at the meetinghouse at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead to record selections from their spring and winter concerts. Among other things, they performed Mozart's *Te Deum*, written when the prodigy was just 13 years old. Danvers Alarm List member Glenn Mairo conceived the event and collaborated with choral director Alexa Vogelzang to make it a reality. He also generously funded the project.

"Hearing the great Danvers High School voices bring the meetinghouse to life that day was one of the most exciting moments of my career. It was my pleasure to facilitate the recording," he remarked.

As a member of one of the three choral classes, I participated first-hand in this slightly surreal experience. The replica 1690s meetinghouse was filled with 21st century recording equipment. The musical selec-

tions represented an eclectic mix of periods and places. "It's a unique blend of music and history," observed one alto. About 60 students packed into the front of the meetinghouse where the songs would be best captured. As each piece was recorded, it was preceded and followed by 15 seconds of silence for editing purposes. The absence of the usual chatter of classmates or the applause of an audience was eerie. The Chamber Singers Class did such an amazing performance of *Joshua Fit The Battle of Jericho* that we had to re-record it. The first time around, the sound level was off the chart.

Danvers Alarm List member Martha Driscoll sat in the audience during the recording session and remarked, "I expected the full chorus to sound beautiful, and they really did. *Te Deum* was spectacular; I kept thinking how wonderful a Christmas concert would be in the Meetinghouse. I was really

surprised by the small group of 12 who sang *Orinoco Flow*. They sounded clear and crisp; you could hear each individual voice."

Chamber Singers tenor, David Cooper, was excited about the choral department's prospects. "It's nice that the choral program will get some recognition," he said. The event also changed the meetinghouse's prospects. "This amazing experience has inspired me to create a new vocal ensemble—the Nurse Homestead Singers—that will rehearse and perform in the meetinghouse," Mr. Mairo said. "We will feature American music of the 'singing school' period of the 18th and 19th centuries."

Mr. Mairo summed up the day best. "It was a grand collaboration, from Alexa Vogelzang's inspiring leadership and friendship, to the singers' enthusiasm, to the brilliant performances of the string quartet, to the warm professionalism of recording engineer Angus Lansing. It was a day to remember."

It takes a village to hull a strawberry

by Jackson Tingle

A staple in the Danvers summer calendar, the annual Colonial Field Day and Strawberry Festival has once again come and gone. And while the crowds were deterred by forbidding weather, this Festival has raised the mark for future events. After months of preparation and coordination by all members of the Alarm List Company, the Homestead had more to offer our visitors than any Festival to date. We made arrangements for 20 high-quality vendors, many of them new to the event. With our recently repaired hearth in operation, we were able to plan living history demonstrations, both domestic and military.

While the rain prohibited the pony rides, hay rides, the blacksmith demonstration, and the participation of 18 of our 20 crafters, we are very thankful for all those who braved the weather and for all those who planned on joining us that day. When we finally closed at four in the afternoon, a total of 480 people had passed through our gate. Due to the inclement weather, we de-

cidated to waive the admission fee and accept any voluntary donations thus making the \$1,000+ mustered from the gate all the more impressive.

I would like to take this moment to publicly thank several of our vendors, cooperating groups, and participants for their contributions. First, we are very thankful for the participation of History Alive! The nationally-renowned theatre group staged two performances of their famous *Cry Innocent: the People versus Bridget Bishop*. As they kick off their season in Salem, we here at the Homestead wish them all the best. As always, Poor Richard's Penny, early American musical group par excellence, entertained both the visitors and staff with their wonderful music and performance. Their participation has become a staple in the event and we thank them for their support. In order to free up our own members, the Danvers Alarm List Company enlisted the help of the North Reading Militia to staff the Balch Tavern. We all appreciated their help both

with setup and breakdown—two particularly daunting parts of the event. Best wishes to them as their autumnal Apple Festival approaches. Finally, I would like to thank all of our amazing volunteers without whom this event would be impossible. From hulling to cleanup, our family, friends, and kindred spirits alleviate much stress and allow us to keep striving for the highest. Thank you all for your ongoing support.

It was a most amazing experience for me to organize this yearly undertaking after being a participant for over a decade. Never before have I seen so many stretch themselves so far to help preserve the Homestead and expand its horizons. I would like to personally thank every member of the Danvers Alarm List Company for their continuing support and tireless effort, my family for their patience, and my fiancée Kerrie for sticking it out with me and keeping me focused. Thank you all for all your diverse contributions. I look forward to many successful events in the future.

Notes from the president's quill...

by Bill Clemens



I normally reserve this column for news, information and tidbits about the Homestead, but for this issue I would like to focus on some Corporate/Militia related matters that deserve mention.

I have reported in previous editions that the Alarm List membership was in the process of revising its thirty-year-old corporate by-laws to better reflect the organization as it exists today rather than the Homestead-less Militia that was organized back in 1974. I am happy to report that the revisions have been finalized, voted on and implemented. We now have a single, overall corporate entity that incorporates two interest groups of separate but equal status: the Militia and the Nurse Homestead. Members may participate in either or both, depending on their personal interests. Another important change allows women to hold major corporate positions. Previously the highest position women could hold was on the board of directors. And to that point, I'm proud to announce that Martha Driscoll was the first

woman to break into the top four offices when she was elected corporate Clerk at the April annual meeting.

On the Militia side, we held an impromptu one-day "tune-up" encampment at the Homestead on May 6 to get our camp gear in usable shape. This was good practice for our upcoming Muster Day, scheduled for September 16, with our friends from the Continental Line Northern Department and the Boston Garrison of the British Brigade. The public will be invited to join us for this fun-filled and noisy event.

In addition, the Militia is attending major out-of-state events commemorating the 225th anniversary of the American War of Independence: Southbury, Conn., in June; Ward Pound Ridge Reservation outside of White Plains, N.Y., in July; and, Yorktown, V.A., this October. With us at these events will be our newest full member, Patricia Bridgman, and our newest recruit, Bryan Crosby, both of Beverly, Mass.

The Company also recently purchased a number of very good quality muskets at very favorable prices. Our armory now has enough loaners to allow new recruits to focus on buying clothing and defer investing in a weapon. If any of you out there have thought about participating in "the hobby," maybe now is the time to act and join the fun. Reading history is a great way to get the facts but living history really brings the facts to life.

Bill Clemens
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To our readers —

The Homestead is busier than ever with productions of *Cry Innocent: the People versus Brigit Bishop*, numerous recording sessions in the Meetinghouse, a new Fall Militia Muster on September 16, and the debut next May of the musical *Salem Towne*, produced by our very own Glenn Mairo.

As the Homestead expands its programming and community outreach, we look to our members and friends for ideas and funding for new events. If you've got an idea for an educational, environmental or cultural activity for the site – large or small, fund-raising or free to the public – please let us know. Out-of-the-box thinking welcome! Feel free to contact me at 978-771-4479 or at chaloff_13@hotmail.com with any and all ideas. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Jackson C. Tingle
Events committee chairperson



4th annual atlatl field day in September

Glenn Mairo of the Rebecca Nurse Homestead and the Massachusetts Archaeological Society wishes to announce that the 4th Annual Massachusetts Atlatl Field Day will take place at the Rebecca Nurse Homestead on September 23 and 24 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This primitive skills field day has become THE premiere atlatl event in Southern New England. Last year's weekend drew over 250 visitors to the beautiful green fields of the Nurse Homestead. The atlatl is a spear-throwing

device that dates back 16,000 years. Throwers of all ages and skill levels from all over New England will participate in a safe, friendly environment. Flintknappers and lithic toolmakers will demonstrate their craft. Bob Berg of Thunderbird Atlatl and "Trapper" John Enos will offer workshops throughout the weekend. The Atlatl Field Day is free to the public. For more information, please contact Mairo at 978-580-9437 or gmairo@hotmail.com.



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The Rebecca Nurse Homestead Preservation Society



Homestead hosts militia muster in September—come visit!

In 1769, Timothy Pickering of Salem lamented the poor condition of local militias, noting that the ranks were filled with men “of the poorer sort,” and “not one officer in five was well versed in the most necessary parts” of their duty. But the slackness that concerned Pickering was about to change. On October 26, 1774, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress ordered all towns to properly equip and drill at least one militia company, to consist of businessmen and landowners (“those with a stake,” said Pickering) aged 16 to 60, and that these militia companies should join with soldiers from other towns in each county for regular musters, or days of practice.

In late 1774 and early 1775, musters were held across Massachusetts. While these events had an important military goal—making soldiers from civilians—muster days were also a time for communities to meet, discuss politics, hear from the local clergy, and socialize in a local tavern. Military preparation became deadly serious on April 19, 1775, when British troops marched to raid the colony’s military supply depot in Concord. Shots rang out at daybreak in Lexington, then again around noon at Concord Bridge. Danvers men rushed to the scene and encountered the returning British troops at the Russell House in Menotomy, our present-day Arlington. In one of the most horrific hand-to-hand fights of the day, the Danvers militia suffered seven dead and two wounded.

The Danvers Alarm List Company and the Rebecca Nurse Homestead will recreate a colonial muster day on Saturday,

September 16th. Colonial reenactors from all over New England will participate in militia drills, musket firing, and with assistance from British reenactors, will portray a portion of the April 19th Russell House and Battle Road fights. Women and children will also participate, playing the part the residents of an 18th century New England village, going about their everyday tasks of washing and cooking. A militia day sermon will be recreated in the Salem Village meetinghouse on the Homestead property.

Tentative schedule for the colonial muster day:

10:00 a.m. opening

10:15-11:30 militia drill

11:45-12:00 sermon in Meetinghouse

1:15-1:45 reenactment of the April 19th Russell House fight

3:00-3:30 reenactment of the April 19th British retreat to Boston

4:00 closing

