

Preliminary Report for the Southborough Historical Material Archive Project at the Southborough Historical Society

Prepared by Adam Brooks, Southborough Library Archivist
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Work on the Southborough Historical Material Archival Project at the Southborough Historical Society (SHS) began on July 21st with an extensive review of the material stored in the basement at the SHS Museum. A broad inventory of the collection made it apparent that the objectives and focus of the initial phase of the project would need to evolve for the sake of the overall preservation of the collection.

Water and high humidity conditions in the storage area created an environment that put much of the collections at risk. This problem was exacerbated by insufficient storage housing. Working on upgrading the storage conditions while examining the entirety of the document and photograph collection has been the primary focus of the project over the past couple months. The organization and location tracking for the collection may also be greatly improved. While the initial phase of the project will take more time, the overall process will move more quickly and the collections will be better positioned for long term preservation and access.

The collections of the SHS are quite small in comparison to similar town historical societies in Massachusetts. However, this is by no means a negative observation. The size of the collection makes it concise and manageable. The collection is also quite strong in multiple areas of town and state history with a small group of stunning objects and another group of extremely interesting collection pieces that possess the potential to tell fascinating stories and act as jumping off points for future researchers.

Two of the most complete and valuable segments of the collection are the family papers and research on prominent Southborough Families and the extensive photography collection. Most of my initial work has revolved around these two collection segments.

Inventory: A detailed inventory of the collection on an item level is beyond the scope of the project at this time.

- Founding/Prominent Family papers – Newton, Brewer, Sawin, Fay, Burnett - The Newton and Sawin Family Papers in particular have multiple historical treasures and fascinating objects that would be fantastic in future exhibitions and publications.
- Southborough Annual Reports 1851 – 2012 (with boxes of some duplicate years)
- Street Lists 1945 – 2009
- Farmer's Almanac 1909 – 1968 (not consecutive)

- Taxable Personal Property Records 1877 –
- Family files in hanging drawers – roughly 1 drawer of material
- Subject files in hanging drawers – organized by agriculture, business, celebrations, cemeteries, churches, etc. alphabetically, with large groups for organizations and schools – roughly 3 drawers worth of material
- Newspaper clippings 1974 – 2003, in boxes
- Burial ground notes
- Deerfoot Farms – archive in boxes, consisting of photos, documents, etc.
- Burnett – business archive
- 2 misc. paige boxes (need in depth research)
- Collection of “Minuteman” (1976) memorabilia
- High School Yearbooks – Script, Peter’s Piper, etc.
- Southborough Town Records (Collection is very well organized and consists of tax assessments, treasurers vouchers, etc.)
- Shelf of misc. posters
- Southborough Societies and Organizations, one archival box

Photography archive – in some case organized alphabetically by subject but lacking organization in other cases – the number represents the number of original photographs – This collection is completely rehoused in archival boxes, archival folders with paper interleaving and when necessary, with polyester sleeves. Each new archival box is marked with the original object location.

- American Legion – 2
- Bridges – 18
- Churches – Original Baptist Church – 1
- Churches – St. Marks – 6
- Churches – Community Federated, Southville – 1
- Churches – Pilgrim Congregational – 10
- Churches – St. Anne – 2
- Civil War Monument – 2
- Cordaville – 1
- Dams – MDC Fayville – 26
- Dams – Nichols Mill – 2

- Deerfoot Meat Plant - 5 (This does not include a large photo collection included in the Deerfoot Farm Archive)
- Fayville - 37
- Flu Epidemic - 1
- Hillcress Inn - 1
- Knights of Columbus - 5
- Mills - 28
- Hurricane 1938 - 22
- Wind Damage - 3
- Ice Storm 1921 or 1927 - 7
- Blizzard 1978 - 1
- Hurricane Edna, 1954 - 12
- Post Office - 44
- Railroad - Cordaville Station - 13
- Railroad - Cordaville Wreck - 25
- Railroad - Fayville Station - 4
- Railroad - Southborough Station - 8
- Railroad - Southville Station - 13
- Railroad - Misc - 11
- Southborough Arms - 7
- Southborough Farming - 10
- Southborough Misc - 53
- Southborough WWII Honor Roll - 20
- Southborough Mile Markers - 3
- Southville Misc - 33
- Southville Wood Street - 2
- Southborough Gay Harter - 5
- VFW Fayville - 2
- Views - 10
- White's Corner - 5
- Wolfpen Auto Museum - 2
- WWI Howitzer - 6
- Scouts - 31

School Photographs (This list corresponds to the original order and arrangement of the collection as well as the preexisting description)

- Elementary, Highland - 2
- Fayville, 1904 - 2
- Peter's High, 1906 - 2
- Peter's High, 1910 - 1
- Primary Grades, 1911-1912 - 1
- Peter's High, 1919 - 1
- Peter's High, 1920 - 5
- Peter's High, 1921-1922 - 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1923-1924 - 2 sheets (multiple prints each)

- Peter's High, 1925-1926, grade 6 through 8 – 2
- South Union, 1926-1927 – 2
- Peter's High, 1927-1928, grade 5 and 6 – 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1928-1929, grade 6 – 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1929-1930, grade 6 – 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1930-1931, grade 6 – 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1931-1932, grade 6 – 3 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1933, grade 6 – 1 booklet (multiple prints inside)
- Peter's High, 1936, grade 5 – 1 booklet (multiple prints inside)
- Peter's High, 1936, grade 6 – 1 sheet (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1939, grade 6 – 1 booklet (multiple prints inside)
- Peter's High, 1940 – 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1941-1942 – 3 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1943-1944, grade 5 – 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1945-1946, grade 5 – 3
- Peter's High and Fayville, 1947-1948 – 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1963-1964, grade 2 – 2 sheets (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1950-1951, grade 6 – 1 sheet (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, 1951-1952, grade 5 – 1 sheet (multiple prints each)
- Peter's High, ? – 6
- Finn School – 2 booklets (multiple prints inside)
- Neary School, 1971-1972 – 1
- Woodward School, grad 6 – 1 strip
- Fay School, misc. – 1
- Peter's High, misc. – 5
- Peter's High Reunion – 2
- Peter's High, 1907-1908 – 3
- Peter's High, Basketball, 1909 – 1
- Peter's High, 1911 – 1
- Peter's High, 1912 – 1
- Peter's High, 1918 – 1
- Peter's High, 1920 – 1
- Peter's High, girl's basketball, 1922-1923 – 1
- Peter's High, boy's basketball, 1922-1923 -1
- Peter's High, 1926 – 1
- Peter's High, 1929 – 1
- Peter's High, 1938 – 3
- Peter's High, 1948 – 2
- Peter's High, 1939 – 2
- Peter's High, 1949 – 2
- Peter's Annex, 1950s – 1 booklet (multiple prints inside)
- Peter's High, 1952, Washington Trip – 1
- Peter's High – 1 sheet (multiple prints)
- Peter's High, 1957 – 5
- Peter's High, Chemistry/Softball – 2
- Peter's High, 1959 – 1

- Peter's High, 1959 – 6
- Peter's High, undated – 9
- Worcester Girl's Trade, 1918 – 1
- Algonquin High School – 1
- Buildings, Peter's High – 16
- Buildings, South Union – 5
- Buildings, Southville and Cordaville – 4
- Buildings, Neary School – 2
- Buildings, Fay School – 18
- Buildings, St. Mark's – 13

People

- Misc. – 27
- Sports – 5
- Military – 15
- Beaton – 1
- Boutillier – 1
- Brewer – 1
- Burke – 2
- Finn – 7
- Fuentes – 3
- Guzzi – 1
- Henderson – 2
- Hill – 1
- Holmes – 1
- Hyde – 1
- Maguire – 2
- Newton – 15
- Burnett – 3
- Parker – 2
- Ramelli – 1
- Ryan – 1
- Sawin – 5
- Turenne – 2
- Hutt – 2
- Four framed photographs of people
- Print, Whitney – 1

Celebrations

- General – 50
- 4th of July, 1902 – 2

The Villager Collection (Less than half of The Villager Collection has been inventoried)

- Celebrations, Memorial Day/Veteran's Day – 30
- Celebrations, Heritage Day, 1990-1992 – 23
- Celebrations, Heritage Day, 1993-1995 – 17

- Baseball – 93
- Soccer – 27
- Hockey – 7
- Tennis – 17
- Basketball – 5
- Golf – 20
- Misc. – 42
- Southborough Players – 25
- Scouts – 62
- People, Identified – 375
- Town Government and Politics – 219

Additional Photographs

- Class Reunion – 26
- Class Reunion, Peter's High, 1935 – 1
- Class Reunion, Peter's High, 1939 – 1
- Horse Teams, Sealey – 2
- Paul S. Lincoln – 1
- Farms, Misc. – 20
- Farms, Deerfoot – 6
- Farms, Wolfpen – 39

Framed Photographs – 30

Framed Documents – 7

Negatives and Transparencies – 100+

- Two boxes of oversized photographs from flat file, D3

Archival Collection Highlights

The document and photography collection of the Southborough Historical Society does not possess the scope and range to be considered a comprehensive reference source for the history of the town. However, the collection does possess some major highlights of both research and exhibition importance.

- Sawin Family Papers – Mores Deed, 1692 and two “Indian” Deeds, 89.9.16
- Newton Family Papers – most interestingly, Sophia Newton’s handwriting book, 86.26.23 and Grace Newton’s essay, “Trip to the Moon”, 86.26.25.
- Burnett and Deerfoot Farm Collection
- Worcester Girl’s Trade School photo, A16
- Historic photo collection
- The Villager photography collection

Recommendation

It is my recommendation that we continue to inventory and update the storage and preservation of the collection. It would also be beneficial to the project, future funding and public investment to digitize a select group of material to make it available on the website. This would be a great way to inform the public of the project and solicit future support beyond local grants.

It is hopeful that a potential outcome of this project will be the reevaluation of the accessioning standards and procedures at SHS. One of the standards of the museum field is the responsibility to care for and preserve all works accessioned into a collection under the public trust. I was intrigued while going through the subject and family files to find many random documents of little historical or institutional value with accession numbers on them. Some examples are print outs from websites and photocopies of articles. Accessioning common documents of this nature create a burden on the future flexibility of the institution, as it becomes time consuming and potentially tricky to deaccession collections. The accessioning procedures at SHS should be reevaluated.

Furthermore, I believe it is important to better define the short-term goals of the first phase of the project as well as the eventual long-term goals for the collection and institution as a whole. This knowledge will allow me to work in a more efficient manner and hopefully create a project that will meet the expectations of all of the parties involved.