

---



# Golden Ball Tavern Grapevine

---

Volume 39, Fall 2008  
Lauren E. Forcucci, Editor

Golden Ball Tavern Museum • 662 Boston Post Road • Weston, MA 02193  
[http:// www.goldenballtavern.org](http://www.goldenballtavern.org)

---



Students and actors filming the new video. (See Director's Report)

## Our Fourth Symposium

BY: LAUREN E. FORCUCCI

On May 12th 2008 from 9-3, we presented our fourth symposium in collaboration with the Massachusetts Historical Society entitled *Comforts of Home? The Real Truth About Daily Life in Colonial and Early Federal America*. Speakers included Elisabeth Garrett Widmer, author, educator, consultant, *"Jerked and Jostled: Travel, a Non-Comfort in Early America;"* Edward Maeder, Director of Exhibitions/Curator of Textiles at Historic Deerfield, Inc., *"Cloth for Ease: the Battle Between Comfort and Chic;"* Debra L. Friedman, Head of Interpretation Department, Old Sturbridge Village, *"The Techno-*

*logical and Social Transformations of the 19th Century Kitchen,"* and Barbara McLean Ward, Director/Curator, Moffatt-Ladd House and Garden, Portsmouth, NH, *"Creating a Comfortable Colonial Home: The Women of the Moffatt-Ladd House in Portsmouth, New Hampshire."*

Following these informative talks, attendees were invited to the museum for a reception and tour.

We look forward to our next symposium in 2010 on women in the colonial and early federal

period. We have already lined up an outstanding group of speakers. Watch for details.



# Director's Report

BY: JOAN BINES, DIRECTOR

One of the pleasures of working at the Golden Ball Tavern is the occasional “find” that reveals to us an important aspect of the history of the house. Recently, we made such a discovery in the form of a letter that Howard Gambrill wrote 40 years ago to the Trustees sharing his insight into why it was important that the “liberation” of the Golden Ball Tavern be undertaken. He wrote:

“Because the fashion of antiquarian pursuit is changing, the challenge to The Golden Ball Tavern is very different from what it would have been twenty years ago . . . The most significant feature of this house is probably not any single architectural detail nor any one artifact discovered, but rather it is the fact of the continued existence in good preservation of a combination of both. Our anxiety to avoid what is usually meant by “restoration”—the creating out of new or old materials what is *thought* to have been the way things once were—is infinitely relieved by our actually being able to find what truly had been there in its original condition or else to leave untouched the changes of a hundred years... Liberating then became the word for... the objective of the Golden Ball Tavern project and the control over our decisions and our work.”

Howard had a unique vision, and he mobilized the energy and resources to undertake the project of turning the old house into a living museum—a true labor of love. He recognized that this philosophy of “liberation” would guide his hand just as it would guide the hand of those who came after him. We, today, are as bound as he was to making our motto “liberation”, not “replacement.” He then added a further component that has always informed the work of the museum—that of education.

His children, through the years, have helped to underwrite their parents’ vision by creating and contributing to the Gambrill Educational Fund. Money from this fund is going toward creating a part time position as coordinator of outreach education projects. We envision having the coordinator help us in offering two talks on beer and brewing in collaboration with the Lexington Historical Society, offering workshops for children, and planning a Family Day in collaboration with Friends of Weston Public Library.

Second, we are teaming up with the Video III class at Weston High School, working with Ted Garland and his students, to make a twenty minute movie about the Patriots’ raid on the Golden Ball Tavern Museum in the winter of 1774. If ever there were an exciting new venture, this is it. Ted has written the script, filling in between the known facts with a lively and compelling narrative. Students are learning about lighting, filming, producing, and local history. Actors are learning their roles as players in the drama of history. The museum is providing funding, resources, and help. We would love to have any of you who might be interested to join us in this effort.

Finally, we are enabling schools that do not have sufficient funding for buses, to bring their classes to the museum. Money from the Gambrill Educational fund pays for the buses. This year, Mother Caroline Academy in Boston sent sixteen eighth graders for an excellent tour. All of this is in addition to the continuing contributions of our wonderful volunteers. We welcome you to come and join the fun.



Don't forget to begin saving your treasures for next year's Annual Outdoor Antiques Show! Look for your yellow postcard for more information!

## 2007 Education Report

BY: KAY CONRAD, EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thanks to my new co-chairs Susie Nichols, Carolyn Maguire and Karen Valovcin, we have developed some new ideas, initiatives and events.

Two luncheons were scheduled to create interest in our volunteer opportunities. These were attended by long-time volunteers as well as some new people who were enthusiastic and eager to become involved in the educational programs. In addition to training new guides, we are planning trips to other historic sites to increase our knowledge. We will have talks and lectures about topics pertaining to the museum.

Our main focus, as always, is the student educational programs. The third and fifth grade students and teachers in Weston are very excited and interested in these tours which fit in with and enhance their study of local history, colonial life and the Revolutionary War period. During 2008 we have created much excitement and interest in our revitalized opportunities and programs. Look for many more events in 2009!

## Straw Matting in the Parlor Chamber

BY: LINDA WISEMAN,  
CURATORIAL COMMITTEE CHAIR

It has long been evident from traces found on the floor boards, that there was straw matting on the floor of the parlor chamber. With the generous help from Richard Nylander of Historic New England (formerly SPNEA) and John Buscemi of Belfry Historic Consultants, the curatorial committee was able to locate period straw matting and have it installed in this second floor chamber. The matting, made in China in the traditional manner, was put down in 24" inch strips, sewn together and tacked to the floor baseboard to baseboard.

This inexpensive floor covering was commonly used in America from the mid 18th century until the first quarter of the 20th century. Even George Washington had it installed at Mount Vernon. During the winter months, wool carpets were often used on top of this matting to help keep the room warmer. It is exciting that with this installation, we are able to continue the Golden Ball Tavern's philosophy of "the house tells us".

## 41st Annual Outdoor Antiques Show

BY: TARE & SUE NEWBURY  
CO-CHAIRS ANNUAL OUTDOOR ANTIQUES SHOW

Well, it had to happen someday; in spite of the efforts of our "Chairmen-in-the-Sky", it finally rained on our parade! However, thanks to the hard work of many volunteers, the continued and generous support of the Friends of the Tavern, and rigorous cost control, our results roughly equaled last year in spite of the 30% reduction in revenues.

While the show takes on a life of its own, it's important to remember that it's but a means to an end, that being providing support for the Museum, its facilities, people and programs.

Thanks to all the volunteers whose hard work and dedication made it happen under very soggy circumstances. I'd especially like to publicly thank my wife Sue, who, after many years is stepping down as co-chair; my time will be coming as well; any takers?

## The Golden Ball Tavern Hotel

BY: WILL MCFARLAND

From about 1880 to 1920, Lettie Frost and husband George Jones (until he died in 1909) ran the Golden Ball Tavern as a boarding hotel. The Museum staff plans to reinterpret the front upstairs rooms, where the boarders stayed, to reflect this period in the history of the house. They wanted to learn as much as possible about the guests who stayed there, so I undertook the research. I started with the handwritten account by Lettie's daughter, May Jones (1873-1957), entitled "Sketch of the Boarders & Inhabitants of the Golden Ball," that I was able to date to c.1893, when May was 20. She wrote colloquially about 20-odd souls, several in enough detail that they could be identified further. While my search into the census reports, and contemporaneous newspapers yielded rich information, here I will give you just a brief idea of the boarders. Lettie wrote: *The first to come as I remember were Walter & Johnnie Brown, two young brothers who came up from St. Johns, to earn their own living and support the rest of their family who were left behind. They worked at the carpenter's trade with Mr. Fitz Robinson until about*

*Continued on next page*

three years ago, when they went into business for themselves and now have a pleasant home of their own. With them came Mr. Charles Wark and Mr. Albert Walsh. The first [was] a harness maker and remained in Weston about 10 years, married one of our Weston girls, Miss Hattie Emerson, who died some three or four years ago, and her husband is now living in Connecticut. Mr. Walsh remained some time, married, and moved from the town. I was able to find that Hattie Emerson was indeed a local Weston girl and that she died on 2 Jan. 1889 in Weston, age 26, of puerperal peritonitis, also called “childbed fever”—in those pre-antiseptic times, a leading killer of young mothers who had just delivered.

One couple May wrote about was identified in fuller detail: *Mr. and Mrs. Charles Brooker came, and [we] found them more like our own family than ones who think only of how much they are going to have to eat. He was [a] Railroad Contract[or] [and] built the Massachusetts Central Railroad from Hudson to Boston. At Waltham while blasting out a ledge he thinking the charge had gone off went back, and the rock exploded. He was burned quite bad, and they found it necessary to amputate his right arm. His loving wife nursed him through it all, and after he had recovered [his] strength and was able to be at work once more her health failed and for some time her life was in danger, but [she] has recovered and they are now living in North Adams.* May also wrote about some of Lettie’s kitchen help: *Although we find interesting people in the front rooms upstairs, let us look in the kitchen where I spent most of my time with the girls who assisted my mother with her duties. There was our jolly Stella, whom we all felt as when she went away [that] part of the fun of the house went with her, always full of life, up to all sorts of tricks and careless, and gave no thoughts to anything but “Get it while you are young.” And now when I see her, although married, I find her the same.*

*There was another pale faced girl from Nova Scotia, and of course we all must remember Jennie Fisher, who fell so desperate[ly] in love with none less than Teddie Parker. Those loving messages and presents [were] lost, for her love was not returned and now though each took a different mate, I wonder do they ever think of their young days at twenty.*

The 1880 U.S. Census shows Stella Parker and Edward W. Parker (“Teddie”) as servants then living at the Golden Ball. Stella was age 17, born in New York of parents also born in New York. Teddie was age 18, born in England of parents also born in England, so he

was not related to Stella. There is no record of Jennie Fisher in the 1880 Census, so she probably came later.

Because the 1890 Census was destroyed by fire in 1921, the 1900 Census is the next one available. The 1900 Census shows three boarders at the Golden Ball Tavern: Percy Warren (34), an engineer; John Smith (32), a coachman; and Leander Rafuse (20), a day laborer. Of the boarders, Percy Warren is of particular interest, since he turned out to be a notable name in Weston history. Pam Fox’s book has both a picture of him and his story:

*Percy Warren (1865-1917) was president and manager of the Weston Water Company, and his brother Harry (1876-1958) worked for the Weston Electric Light Company and its later owner, Edison Electric Illuminating Company. Both were public-spirited men instrumental in introducing new services to the town.*

*Public sentiment apparently favored the name “Warren,” which was given to all three streets in the neighborhood: Warren Avenue, Warren Lane, and Warren Place... When he died in June 1917, [Percy] was remembered as “one of Weston’s best loved citizens.”*

Percy was most likely using the Golden Ball Hotel in 1900 as a “home away from home” (since he was born and raised in Weston) until he married in 1904 and built his own house at the end of now-Warren Avenue. One is tempted to speculate that Percy’s younger brother, Harry, met and married May Jones because of visits to older brother Percy when he was living at the Golden Ball!

I was able to discover from a newspaper notice that a young local doctor, F.T. Hyde, was most likely renting office space.

*Dr. F.T. Hyde has removed his office to the old Golden Ball Inn opposite the Baptist Church, where he may be found from 1 to 3 daily except Sunday and holidays.*

Frederick Tanquary Hyde was a physician in Weston, age 28 at the time of the 1900 Census, born in May 1872 in Virginia. He was single and boarded at the house of Louis Rice, age 27, with two other males, both servants.

The Golden Ball’s era as a boarding hotel was winding down by 1910 and had ended by 1920. The 1910 Census shows Ralph Frost Jones (39) as the Head of household, with mother Lettie (65), sister May’s family (May herself (35), husband Harry Warren (33), and daughter Alice (5), and boarder Charles Watts (41) from England and handyman John Pratt (56) from Ireland rounding it out. Charles Watts, while listed as a boarder, apparently ran the greenhouse, and John Pratt, though called a handyman, must have helped Ralph run the farm.