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# Golden Ball Tavern Grapevine

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Volume 42, Fall 2011  
Editor: Joan Bines

Golden Ball Tavern Museum • 662 Boston Post Road • Weston, MA 02493  
<http://www.goldenballtavern.org>

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The Education Committee: standing, Nathalie Thompson, Carolyn McGuire, Susie Nichols, Michelle Roman, Karen Valovcin; Seated, Becky Callow



Scarecrows at the Golden Ball Tavern Museum, created by the Education Committee

## Education Committee Update

BY: SUSIE NICHOLS AND JOAN BINES

The Education Committee of the Golden Ball Tavern is at the heart of what we are all about. **Carolyn McGuire, Susie Nichols, Karen Valovcin, Becky Callow, Nathalie Thompson, and Michelle Roman** have re-energized the committee, turning it into the engine for school programs, youth programs, open houses, and yes, even Patriot scarecrow making. They bring energy and intelligence to creating curriculum for the school visits—creating maps and readings to enhance the tours. Together they created crafts for young visitors to the open house this month. Michelle Roman is redesigning the Girl Scout offerings to meet

the new requirements and badges this year. Becky Callow is helping to publicize the museum's offerings. And all of the committee members contribute to researching and enriching our offerings.

On December 4, the committee planned another open house, this time to enable visitors to enjoy the beautiful holiday decorations designed and installed by Country Garden Club.

They are reaching out to home-schooled students, giving their first such tour to a Billerica group in early December. The committee looks forward to many more school groups as the winter and spring come along.



Barbara and Joe Provost with the Golden Ball Tavern loom

## Bringing Weaving Back to the Golden Ball

At the Annual Outdoor Antiques Show this fall, **Barbara and Joe Provost** told us of their interest in researching old looms with the goal of restoring them to working order. They were eager to see our loom, and when they saw it, felt certain that they could help us restore it to working order. They came recently to take the measurements for the needed elements. Barbara has also offered to set up our smaller loom so that we can begin to teach interested people to weave towels even before we start work on our big loom.

Barbara is an expert weaver who teaches spinning and weaving classes at the American Textile History Museum and at the Weavers' Guild of Boston. Joe graduated from The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and went on to work as an artist as well as an exhibit designer before he joined Barbara in researching, restoring and conserving old looms.

Our loom is from the early 1800s. Finding it in our house gave us evidence that someone in that period most likely did professional weaving—in the attic where we have a small fireplace as well as a skylight. Ours is a transitional piece between a hand loom

and a mechanical one, interesting to students of looms because the patents for looms were destroyed in a patent office fire in the early 1800's. Our loom weaves 45" across and would have been used for bed ticking, table cloths, sheets, drapes, blankets, linen shirting, women's petticoats, as well as household textiles. We look forward to having our loom once again producing textiles.

## Wow! "They" Did it Again!

BY: TARE NEWBURY

But who are "they"?

The first set includes **Howard Gambrill** and **Bill Whittemore**, who were "up there" with their brooms, sweeping away the rain-producing clouds. I looked out a window at 2am, and it was pouring! Not good! When I left the house at 5, there was not a drop. Thanks Howard and Bill.

Of course, the other set includes all the volunteers who made it happen. If I try to mention all the names, I surely will forget some, and not wanting to hurt feelings, I will single out only one, **Bob Peatman**, who took over the Cafe from father **Dale**, and with his crew, did a great job. Good work, Bob.

Collectively, there are approximately 50 show volunteers, each performing tasks that are critical to the show's success. The folks who run the barn, pick up the donations, run the pre-show party, the lunch, the ticket sales and booths, the cash and bill payments, the popcorn and coffee stand, the gate keepers, the signage and fence crews, the traffic directors—thank you all! We deeply appreciate the generous donation of your time and energy.

The Annual Outdoor Antiques show is our only fundraiser of the year, and once again it proved highly successful. Proceeds from the show go to run the museum's programs. We hope you all will look through your houses for donations for next year's show.



# Director's Report

BY JOAN BINES

Perusing *History News*, the magazine of the American Association of State and Local History, I came across an article entitled, "Do History Museums Still Need Objects?" The author set out to identify the "issues and challenges we are confronting today as we seek to interpret artifacts effectively for a public audience." She writes, "For history museums, our objects aren't our only authentic attributes—we also have historic buildings, meaningful stories, and repositories of intangible cultural heritage like music, dance, foodways—but objects are a crucial element of our approach to authenticity."

It got me started thinking about how wise and forward thinking **Howard Gambrill** was when he first set out to turn the Golden Ball Tavern into a museum. He was totally aware of the need to have the objects speak to the visitors to help tell the story of change through time that occurred over two hundred years to one family in this one house in Weston, Massachusetts. His motto—The House Tells Us—announced from the very beginning that his focus was going to be the whole unfolding story, not the static objects themselves. And the story that he wanted to tell was all encompassing. Who was Isaac and how did he factor into the history of his period? For this he researched far and wide to gather all the information he could from letters, newspapers, histories, account books, town records, and military records. What was his family like? For this he looked in diaries, account books, letters, legal documents, dowries, and family bibles, town records, and books. All this while doing what he called "liberating" the house—again lovingly uncovering layer upon layer, and preserving evidence for all the different periods, to let the house truly tell its own story of change.

I have been Director since 1984, and I have had the pleasure to further Howard's vision, never once in all those years tiring of the challenge, or being bored with the undertaking. With the help of energetic, talented volunteers, we have built education programs to teach the truly important and fascinating stories that come from the tavern: Isaac's involvement with the coming of the American Revolution; his family's life in the colonial period; on and on.

We have created many exhibits—among them a genealogy exhibit; photographs of changes to the house; an archaeological exhibit, Remains to be Seen; a time-

line that places the family and the house into its historic context in Weston, Massachusetts, the United States and the world from the 1770's to today. At the moment, the Exhibit Committee is finishing the reinterpretation of the two upstairs front chambers to bring our "story of change" up to the 20th century. (See the *Exhibits Committee* article) It is remarkable that fifty years ago Howard knew what Ms. Tisdale emphasizes today: "...objects are worth the extra effort, as centerpieces for dialogue, and as loci of meaning; as delights and surprises, as enigmas, as touchstones, as treasures. Yes, history museums need them."

## Exhibits Committee

The Exhibits Committee (**Linda Wiseman, Kay Conrad, and Joan Bines**) has been working diligently over the past months to create new exhibits in the front two upstairs bedrooms. In keeping with the motto that the house shows "change through time", we wanted to bring the story of the Golden Ball up to its time as the Golden Ball Hotel from the 1880s to the early 1900s. We worked from the journal of May Jones (Warren), daughter of Lettie and George Jones, who as a 20 year old, wrote an account of the boarders as she remembered them. In addition, **Will McFarland** did invaluable and much appreciated research for us to further identify the people mentioned in May's account. Using this information as well as representative furniture found in the house—for instance, many wash stands with wash bowls and pitchers—we will present in the northwest bedroom the story of the people who boarded with the Jones family. In the northeast bedroom, we will tell the story of Lettie (Oletta) Frost Jones who, we believe, provided the impetus and the energy to turn the house into a money-making enterprise as it had been 100 years earlier. We combed Lettie's diary and letters to tease out just how this girl from Milo, Maine, got to Weston; how she came to know and marry George Jones; why she decided to open the house as a hotel; and what changes she made in the house over these years.

While we went in answer to the original question "How did Lettie get to Weston", we found ourselves learning fascinating details about Lettie's reaction to national events as well as about her character. One of the most moving entries in her diary is that of April 15, 1865, when, living alone in Boston before joining her sister in Sullivan, Maine, she learned of President Lincoln's death. She wrote:

*Continued on next page*

“This has been the saddest day the nation ever saw. The whole nation today mourns the loss of our beloved and honored President Abraham Lincoln! Cursed be the man that fired that fatal shot. ...Just now when peace is in sight when victory after victory rings upon our ears and we have been so jubilant what now? At this important time when we need him the most, he should fall and which defies all description. That he should fall by the hand of a villain @ [sic] traitor. Tonight he sleeps in death. 24 hours ago, he was well & full of life.”

Yet another entry, that of August, 3, 1865, reveals something of the drive that would impel her to open the Golden Ball Hotel fifteen years later.

“...surely money does make folks happy. I am sure without it, we could not enjoy anything or at least there is not much happiness where folks must have everything they do not want, & not have anything they do want. I hope it will be my good fortune in my time to have all I want to be comfortable & make life easy and pleasant. But I have always had to work, no not always, but for the past six years, & I guess I shall have to in the years to come.”

The exhibits should be completed soon. Watch for news of their opening, and don't forget to check our website for upcoming events and interesting articles [goldenballtavern.org](http://goldenballtavern.org).

## Sixth Biennial Symposium

The Golden Ball Tavern Museum is offering its sixth biennial symposium on May 7, 2012. This year's topic is *Eat, Drink, and be Merry: Tavern Food and Drink in the Late Colonial and Early Federal Period*. **Donald R. Friary**, President of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts and Independent Consultant with History For Hire, will speak on “*One Bowl More And then*”: *Punch Drinking in the 18th Century*. **Keith Stavely** and **Kathleen Fitzgerald**, authors of *Northern Hospitality: Cooking by the Book in New England* will speak on “*I desired a fricasee*”: *The New England Tavern and Culinary Refinement in the Eighteenth Century*; **Joe Carlin**, author of *Cocktails: A Global History* will speak on *Food and Drink in a Colonial Tavern and the Invention of the Cocktail*; and **Kate Carney**, Living History Presenter will speak on, *Paul Revere's Mother-in-Law: How a Colonial Boston Innkeeper Copes*.

The talks will be followed by a Reception and tour at the Golden Ball Tavern Museum. In addition, this year we are pleased to end the Symposium with the offering of a three-course meal prepared by Chef Sam Hunt, Executive Chef of *15 Walnut* in Hamilton, MA. Chef Hunt will marry historic dishes and ingredients with modern flair in a meal that will both educate and delight. This celebratory event will be held at 7pm at the Josiah Smith Tavern in Weston, MA. Cost is \$60.00 (BYOB) per person and includes appetizers and a three-course meal. Dietary restrictions can be accommodated. For information, go to [goldenballtavern.org](http://goldenballtavern.org) or call the museum at 781-894-1751.

### Eat, Drink, and be Merry:

#### Tavern Food and Drink in the Late Colonial and Early Federal Period

Please return this form by Friday, April 25, 2012

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Number attending @\$100.00 per person \_\_\_\_\_

Lunch: Please indicate your sandwich choice:

Turkey       Roasted veggie/goat cheese

Tuna salad

Please indicate here how many will attend the dinner @\$60.00 per person: \_\_\_\_\_

Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Golden Ball Tavern Museum  
P.O. Box 223  
Weston, MA02493

Seating is limited to 100. A registration fee of \$100.00 (payable to the Golden Ball Tavern Museum) is required with registration form. Lunch is included. If space is not available, your check will be returned. Please respond by Friday, April 25.