


Golden Ball Tavern Grapevine

Volume 43, Fall 2012
Editor: Joan Bines

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

Showing Change Through Time— A New Exhibit of the Golden Ball Hotel in the 1880s

BY JOAN BINES



Lettie Frost's bedroom exhibit

The Exhibits Committee is completing the reinterpretation of the front two upstairs chambers. In keeping with the museum's philosophy of showing "change through time", we thought it appropriate to tell the story of how, for the second time, the Golden Ball Tavern came to serve the public, this time as a boarding house, when Lettie Frost Jones opened the Golden Ball Hotel.

Between the end of the Civil War and the early 1900's, the country moved from being largely an agricultural to predominantly an industrial economy. This revolutionary change was fueled in large part by the building of railroad lines that spanned the coun-

try, opened new markets, and connected people from all sections in a national economy. Railroads would bring about more efficient commerce and travel to a nation that believed firmly in progress.

It is interesting to note that Isaac's daughter Martha had invested in railroad stock in the 1830's, a move marking her as a forward-thinking, risk-taking woman. But she could not have known then how much the railroads would change life for her family. By the 1880's, small family farms like the Jones's could not compete in the fast-paced national marketplace.

George Jones, Isaac's great, great grandson, had

Continued on next page

married Lettie Frost in 1869. By the 1880's they needed additional funds to maintain their family, home, and farm. Lettie, an energetic and imaginative woman, saw an opportunity. She opened the house as the Golden Ball Hotel/Inn, an echo of the house's original use as Golden Ball Tavern which had offered travelers a place to stay in the 1770's and 1780's. Once again the house would be both a private home and a public inn.

Unlike in colonial days, now people needed a place for an extended period, thereby being defined as boarders. In our research, we found boarders staying for as short as a summer or as long as ten years. Carpenters, painters, printers, harness makers, railroad workers, house builders, and domestic servants

all found accommodation here. These boarders were lodged alongside the three generations of Jones family members—at times totaling up to nine Joneses—who already lived in the house.

We show the north/west chamber as the boarders' room and the north/east chamber as Lettie and George Jones' bedroom, concentrating on telling Lettie's story.

We are awaiting the installation of the period appropriate wallpaper (pieces of which were found still on the walls in the adjoining pass-through closet), and then we will invite members to come celebrate the opening of new exhibit. Watch for details on our website, goldenballtavern.org.



Lincoln Scouts visiting the museum



Education Committee weaving belts

The Education Committee in Action

By MICHELLE ROMAN

This has been a busy time for the Education Committee! In September, we decided to focus our efforts on having more student, Scout, and community groups visit the Golden Ball Tavern, and this has paid off! In addition to visits by Weston 3rd and 5th graders which will happen later in the school year, this Fall, we added a program for Weston High School US History students seeking extra credit. As a result, we had over thirty 11th grade students (plus some family members) come and tour the Tavern to learn about Isaac's Dilemma (whether to remain a Loyalist or join the Patriot cause) and his role in the Revolutionary War. This program will be offered again in the

spring. In addition, our outreach to Scout programs in neighboring towns is also reaping results: a Lincoln Girl Scout Troop visited us in October and a Sudbury Troop has scheduled a January visit.

As part of our community focus, we are inviting various Weston community groups to come tour the museum. We already have one group scheduled for late November. If you belong to an organization that might want a tour or to hold a meeting at the museum in conjunction with a tour, please let us know!

An important and enjoyable part of being on the Education Committee is educating ourselves so that we

Continued on next page

can update and expand our programs. Towards that end, **Barbara Provest** (expert weaver) held an introductory weaving class for us. We all passed and each of us has a belt (woven, of course) to prove it. In the future, we hope to be able to offer weaving programs at the museum. We also went on two field trips, one to the Lowell Textile Museum and one to the Old State House Museum.

We are currently pursuing other improvements to and expansions of our programs and are thrilled to be working with Golden Ball's Weston 300th Committee to plan and carry out events for next year's ongoing celebration. It should be an exciting year! If you would like to get involved with any of our efforts or know of groups that might want to visit the Golden Ball Tavern, please contact **Michelle Roman** (MichelleLRoman@gmail.com) or **Carolyn McGuire** (ccmcguire@comcast.net), Co-chairs of the Education Committee.

The Jones who Went to War

BY PAM FOX

Ralph Abrams Jones, great-grandson of the builder of the Golden Ball Tavern, was only seventeen and a half when he enlisted in the 35th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. He died less than one month later in the Battle of Antietam—Weston's first casualty of the Civil War.

The Massachusetts 35th Regiment, which included the first quota of 17 from Weston, saw some of the heaviest action in the war. In his address at the reception for returned soldiers, Rev. E.H. Sears spoke about this regiment:

The Thirty-fifth was gathered largely from the homes of Middlesex, so rich in Revolutionary memories . . . Without drill, without any of that preparation which hardens the recruit into the veteran, the Thirty-fifth were plunged at once into the thickest of the fray.

According to Sears, the regiment lost two-thirds of its officers and nearly one-third of its men, either killed or wounded, in less than a month after leaving New England.



Ralph Abrams Jones

For family members and friends in the North, the prospect of loved ones dying far from home and buried in what most considered profane Southern soil led to anguish and outrage. In the 19th century, death generally occurred in the home. People had a chance to view the body; and burial took place in a familiar place, which usually included previously departed family and neighbors.

At a Weston Town Meeting on September 27, 1862, voters passed a resolution to pay the Rev. Topliff \$273.68 to travel to Maryland to recover the bodies of Ralph Jones and Frederick Hews, and to render aid to other sick and wounded Weston soldiers. He was able to bring home Joseph Smith, who had been wounded at Antietam. According to oral history, the minister brought back rhododendrons and planted them by the wrought iron gates to the Central Burying Ground in memory of Ralph Jones and the others who gave their lives in the Civil War

45 Years... Wow!!

BY TARE NEWBURY

Only meaningful activities that produce positive contributions tend to be long-lived, and our annual Outdoor Antiques Show & Sale ranks right up there with the best of them. To fully appreciate its significance, think of where the Museum would be today without the one million dollars the Show has contributed over its 45 year life; not a pretty picture.

In spite of the weather (again), the weekend started off with a bang with a festive Preview Party under the direction of **Barbara Peatman** and **Catha Hesse**, with its diversified and bountiful offering of gastronomical delights. We were once again treated to **Stuart Whitehurst's** wit and wisdom as he toured the Barn and answered questions.

On Saturday, as the precipitation decreased, the crowds increased, resulting in another profitable Show (see first paragraph).

As always, I hesitate to mention names for fear that those not mentioned may feel under-appreciated. But let me be very clear on the subject; it takes the work and dedication of all of the approximately 50 volunteers to make it all come together. Thanks go to all that sold, bought, parked, greeted,



Chappy Powell in GBT apron, ready to help

served, cooked, picked up, priced, cleaned, displayed, counted, and contributed in so many ways to our success.

Having said that, I want to say a heartfelt “THANK YOU” to my friend, **Sue Newbury** who, after several false starts has finally resigned as Chair of the Barn Committee. Next year that responsibility will be in the capable hands of **Lyn Lord**. I look forward to working with all of you next year; maybe something “special” to celebrate the Town’s 300th?

An Invitation from the Director

BY JOAN BINES

The momentum at the Golden Ball Tavern Museum is definitely picking up! Our truly outstanding symposium was followed by an equally superb colonial dinner. We had the successful Outdoor Antiques Show, numerous tours, new education initiatives, new exhibits, on and on. Plus, we are gearing up to be an active part of the **Weston 300th** celebration. What we need now is more volunteers—men and women, young and old, eager to help with any and all of these fun and interesting undertakings. Please think of giving us a bit of your time to help with

everything from gardening and hospitality to guiding and education. Look on our website **goldenball-tavern.org** to see the list of volunteer opportunities and then call **Joan Bines** at 781-894-1751 to sign up!

