



Dorchester Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Dorchester Historical Society, 195 Boston Street, Dorchester, Massachusetts 02125-1613
www.dorchesterhistoricalsociety.org

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Spring/Summer 2009

Fruit of the vine yields financial harvest

Dorchester Historical Society hosted a fundraiser at the Boston Winery at 26 Ericcson Street on Port Norfolk, on May 3. The wine-tasting event included a tour of the wine-making process and samples of Cabernet, Merlot and Zinfandel produced by the winery. The Society met its goal of raising \$10,000 to earn a \$5,000 match for a total of \$15,000. This money will allow the Society to continue its efforts to improve the landscape and buildings at the Society's headquarters on Boston Street.

Projects for spring-summer, 2009 include working with EarthWorks, a volunteer-based, non-profit organization working to create a healthier and more sustainable urban environment in Greater Boston, on the installation of a pear orchard and fruiting shrubs in the northeast corner of the headquarters, the old Clapp homestead, where pears were hybridized in the nineteenth century. Work will also begin to re-furbish the front entrance walk to the William Clapp House, and rebuilding the bulkhead of the Lemuel Clap House.

In addition, the Society has



DHS board member Paul Delory took the lead role in planning the wine tasting fundraiser on May 3. Paul and Jim Martorano, of the Boston Winery, raise a glass.



Jeff Gonyeau, DHS board of directors, with Shelby Graham and Mike Larsson at the wine tasting.

received a \$3,000 grant award from the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund for landscape improvements at the property.

The Society's board has worked tirelessly over a three year span to produce a vision for the future of the Society and its facilities, relinquishing the house-museum model for a series of learning galleries, both indoors and out. The renovation of the barn will allow the introduction of new exhibits related to the history of agriculture in Dorchester through the lens of the Clapp family's residence in Dorchester for four centuries. Exhibits will focus on plant varieties and propagation, geographical changes, carpentry,

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Recent programs

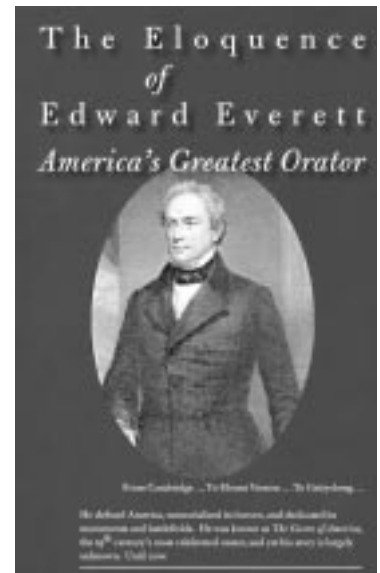
Author discusses book about Edward Everett

In February, Richard Katula spoke about Edward Everett, a Dorchester native who became the most celebrated orator of the nineteenth century. Among Everett's accomplishments, he was editor of the *North American Review* from 1820 until 1824, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, the governor of Massachusetts, U.S. Minister to Great Britain, president of Harvard University, Secretary of State, and U.S. Senator, in that order.

Katula's book, "The Eloquence of Edward Everett," has been published by the Dorchester Historical Society. You can be the proud owner of a copy for only \$20 plus \$4 shipping and handling.

Dorchester Historical Society members may order the book for only \$18 total including shipping and handling - a \$6 savings.

E-mail Ermmwwt@aol.com to order, or write to Dorchester Historical Society, 195 Boston Street, Dorchester, MA 02125.



Mary Westcott from Kaminski Auctions appraises a teddy bear at the program held March 22.

Antique Appraisal Day drew a big crowd

The Society's March program "Antique Appraisal Day" was a big hit. The event drew an overwhelming number of guests.

Mary Westcott from Kaminski Auctions provided a great deal of knowledge and was very entertaining. Although some were disappointed in the valuations, most had a good time.

To see more pictures of the event, visit www.flickr.com/photos/ermmwwt/sets/72157615754967489/show/.



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100 years of monuments

June 2009, is the 100th anniversary of four monuments to history in Dorchester. These stones can be found at the following locations.. Savin Hill park itself, not just the marker, is one hundred years old this year

- Edward Everett House marker at Edward Everett Square
- Old Dorchester North Burial Ground
- Town Meeting Square, at the intersection of Pleasant, Pond and Cottage Streets
- Savin Hill Park

Made in Dorchester:

Roswell Gleason, pewter and silverplate manufacturer

The Society mounted an exhibit of pewter candlesticks, whale-oil lamps and teapots made by Roswell Gleason at UMass/Boston's Healey Library, Special Collections Department and Gallery, from February through April.

Born in 1799, Gleason spent his early years on a farm in Vermont. In 1818 he arrived in Dorchester and found employment with Mr. Wilcox, a maker of tinware. Gleason went into business for himself about 1830, beginning with the manufacture of block tin and pewter.

By 1837, when the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanic Association awarded Gleason a medal for his tinware, he had also branched out into the production of Britannia ware (fine pewter work) with considerable recognition. In the 1850s, with the encouragement of Daniel Webster, Gleason and one of his sons opened the first silver-plating establishment in America. At one time he employed 125 men at his factory on Washington Street. By 1851 Gleason had become wealthy enough to be included in a book entitled *Rich Men of Massachusetts*. Indeed, *Lilacs*, his home on Washington Street, built in 1837, had become one of the show places in the neighborhood. He owned a property of 25 acres with a 1,000 foot frontage on Washington Street encompassing his house and 15 other structures including stables, outbuildings and factory buildings.

In the 1890s after Gleason's death and the subdivision of the property, Claybourne Street (originally Ridge Road) was constructed, and the Gleason House was turned around to face east, later becoming 101 Claybourne Street.

The house was one of the area's finest examples of the transition from Greek to Gothic Revival domestic



architecture. The form of the house was characteristic of Greek Revival standards, but the decorative elements were part of the late Gothic style.

The two-bay entrance contained a portico of gothic spirelets and floor-length lancet-shaped sidelight windows. There was a two-story, three-bay porch composed of arcaded, pointed arches supported by clustered columns, with annulets below the capitals and scroll-carved decoration in the spandrels. The interior of the house was decorated in Empire style, and many of its features were taken by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts for its collection prior to demolition of

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the building in the 1980s.

When Gleason began the production of silver-plate, the style of his work began to change from a simple, traditionally inspired design to a more heavily ornamented and opulent style, which better suited the tastes of his Victorian clientele.

Largely due to this ability to adapt to changing tastes and to keep abreast of technical advances in manufacturing, Gleason's operation continued to

prosper. But business suffered when the Civil War interrupted sales in the southern states. After both his sons died, and an explosion occurred in one of his factories, he retired in 1871 at the age of 72. He died in Dorchester in 1887.

Wine tasting event: Savoring the company



From left, father and son Ed and Bill Forry of The Dorchester Reporter with Edward Baudoin.



DHS board member Charlie Tevnan and Susan Tevnan, his wife, with Earl Taylor, president of the DHS board of directors.



Barry and Cindy Fadden with Mary and Bob Moran.



Charlie and Judy Tuttle with Boston City Council member Maureen Feeney.

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milling, tanning, wool and hemp production, dairying, and other family pursuits.

The other buildings will receive updated exhibits related to Dorchester architecture, the Siege of Boston and the military action at Dorchester Heights, Dorchester industry through the centuries and many other topics. Updated gallery space will allow the Society to show more of its collections, ninety percent of which are now in storage.

The Society's plan was set up as a series of discreet modules that can be achieved a little at a time, except for the restoration of the barn.

The Society will need to raise \$250,000 to restore the barn for its new uses, and the Society considers the barn to be one its top priorities. A portion of every dollar raised will be reserved for the improvement of what is one of the few remaining formerly-working barns in Boston.

New orchard and other landscape improvements underway at DHS



Anne Schmaltz, DHS Board member, has been the driving force behind recent landscape improvements.



From left, volunteers Shankhar, Sidhardh and Bindu Krishna, Laura Merwin, Vinodinia Gupta and Pam Reich helped plant flower beds.

Volunteers helped with planting pear trees and fruiting shrubs May 30 on the grounds of the William Clapp house at 195 Boston Street.

The establishment of a pear orchard, along with fruiting shrubs to attract pollinating insects, is the first step in implementing the landscape plan devised last year with pro-bono assistance from COG design in which each area will become an outdoor learning gallery. Support for this step comes from

EarthWorks, with funding from the Harold Whitworth Charitable Trust and from the New England Grassroots Environmental Fund.

The Society wants to capitalize on the agricultural history of the Clapp property, the origin of various varieties of pears and other food-producing plants. The Clapp favorite pear, a cross between a Flemish beauty and a Bartlett, is still grown all over the world.

Benjamin Crouch, urban forestry program

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Volunteer Bob Chapin and DHS Board member Emy Thomas work on a border garden.

Dorchester to celebrate Charter Day with Boston, Watertown

Charter Day is the commemoration of the naming day of three towns: Boston, Dorchester and Watertown in September, 1630. The Partnership of the Historic Bostons (England and Massachusetts) has celebrated only in Boston, but this year all three towns will participate in events on Sept.10-13.

On Thursday,, the Boston Public Library at Copley Square will host the opening talk. The Charter Day group will lead a State House tour on Friday, and the

DHS will give tours of the Blake House, the burial ground, the Lemuel Clap and William Clapp houses.

The Massachusetts Archives on Columbia Point will host a talk Friday night. On Saturday, there will be tours of historic sites in Watertown. Panel discussion about the early government of the towns will be led by Robert Allison (Boston), Earl Taylor (Dorchester) and Mark Harris (Watertown). On Sunday the group will lead a Founders' Tour of Boston.

Landscape changes continue at Boston Street property

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director of EarthWorks, is establishing the orchard, which will be supplemented by currants, blueberries and gooseberries. The plan is to integrate outdoor "galleries" with indoor displays of farming tools and implements.

Earthworks, an organization that trains youth in nutrition, ecology and orchard and garden maintenance, planted new trees at Edward Everett Square next to the Blake House in 2002. Aside from their youth crew, which is hired through the Boston Youth Fund each summer, Earthworks relies on volunteer labor.

DHS and Earthworks are looking for community input and involvement from residents and from children who attend area schools.

Dorchester Historical Society Board of Directors, 2009-2010

As a result of elections in May, the following Officers and Directors are now in office:

Officers

Earl Taylor,
President

Charles Tevnan,
Vice President

Robert Bayard Severy,
Secretary

Rosanne Foley,
Treasurer

Directors (terms vary)

Robin Allsop

Kit Binns

Ruth Brown

Jim Cooke

Daniel Cushing

Larry Davidson

Paul DeLorey

Sean C. Denniston

Jeffrey Gonyeau

E. Sydney Hanlon

Janice Knight

Barbara Langis

Philip Lindsay

Karen L. MacNutt

Richard O'Mara

Anne Schmalz

Michael Stella

Emy Thomas



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