



GREAT BARRINGTON  
*Historical Society*  
& MUSEUM



# Spring Newsletter

March, 2026

## The "Noble Train" Reenactment at the Museum

January 10th was a big day for the Society as the Great Barrington reenactment of the General Knox "Noble Train of Artillery" began at the museum and continued to parade to town hall. Many of the reenactors started gathering at the museum at 11:00 following their participation in a morning celebration in Alford. We served as the staging area for their march, as well as a welcome rest stop for refreshments and rehearsals. A good crowd was on hand to witness the event and to tour the museum.



The march was led by the Berkshire Fife and Drum Corps followed by militia reenactors and Clydesdale horses drawing sleds with cannons. *Photos courtesy of Lee Rogers, Gary Leveille and Robert Krol.*





The museum at the historic Wheeler Farmstead was indeed a perfect location for this event as the house is one of the oldest in Great Barrington. A small one room home built in the 1740s, (left side of building above) was purchased by Truman Wheeler in 1765. He immediately expanded it into the "saltbox" style of structure, with the remaining additions completed by 1771.



## Why should Captain Truman Wheeler (1741-1815) be remembered?

*Mr Truman Wheeler*



We do not have a painting of him, only his autograph. A father, farmer, and merchant, he was described as a "well-respected man of genial and social disposition." He was also active in the Patriotic cause. He participated in the Stockbridge Convention in July, 1774 opposing the Intolerable Acts. He was a Charter member of the Great Barrington Committee of Correspondence, Inspection & Safety and served as Muster Master for Berkshire and Litchfield Counties enlisting 986 recruits for Washington's Continental Army.

**Wheeler was also a soldier in the Continental Army. He was at the Battle of Bennington and served under General Gates, General John Fellows at Stillwater, NY, and Col. John Ashley's Regiment. As Hessian and British prisoners marched through Great Barrington after their defeat at the Battle of Saratoga, Wheeler treated many of the soldiers who were suffering from "Camp Fever."**

Wheeler was also an important town leader. After the war he served as Justice of the Peace, Town Treasurer and later Representative to the Great & General Court in 1796. He also protected Deputy Sheriff Kellogg when he escaped to the Wheeler House during Shays' Rebellion.

The Wheeler Farmstead remained in the Wheeler family for 250 years. A picture of Truman's grandson Merritt hangs in the museum.

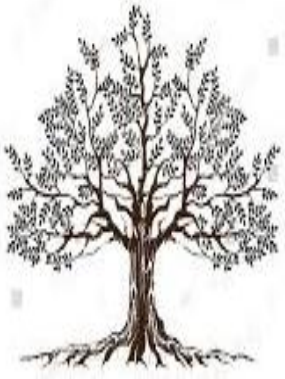




**The March to our  
250th Celebration  
Memorial Day Weekend  
Saturday, May 23 at the museum**



**\*Dedication of the Great Barrington  
Liberty Elm Tree & Liberty Pole**



The Society is proud to honor our country's 250th with special events throughout this year starting on Memorial Day weekend, Saturday, May 23rd. You are invited to attend the dedication of the Great Barrington Liberty Tree and Liberty Pole here at the museum grounds. Our Jefferson Elm tree is a perfect tree to represent the original elm tree found on Boston Commons. That tree was the

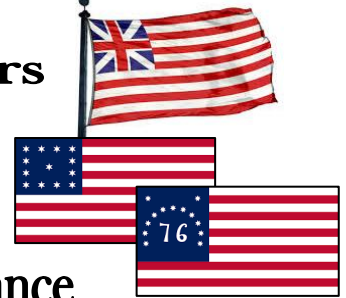


site of Sons of Liberty meetings to discuss and plan protests against the British Intolerable Acts. The Liberty Pole located near the tree would be used to call them to meet.

**\*Presentation of Colonial Colors**



There were many Colonial flags flown prior to the adoption of the Stars and Stripes. We will conduct a ceremony to present and display 13 of those flags.



**\*Berkshire Fife and Drum Corps Performance**

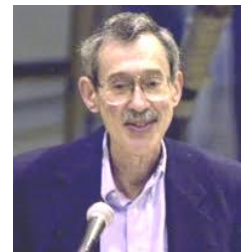
The Berkshire Fife & Drum Corps will be performing during the ceremony.



**\*Premier of the "Freedom isn't Free"  
Exhibit featuring:**



A tribute to our brave men and women who served to ensure our Freedom featuring personal family artifacts in our archives and on loan to the museum. Also on display will be a solemn tribute to the Great Barrington and Housatonic residents Killed in Action, and the David Rutstein Memorial Collection of World War I memorabilia.





We need your artifacts  
for our exhibit

# *Freedom isn't Free*

We are planning a full five-room exhibit featuring personal artifacts from your family, highlighting their role in our country's struggle to maintain our freedom during wars in history. We would also like to create a tribute to the heroes of 9-11, for we know that some of our families have direct connections to that day. But we need you to help us highlight those contributions and sacrifices made by our families during times of peril.

So many of us have cherished mementos of our father's and mother's involvement in all our country's wars. And now it's time to honor those who served abroad and here at home. It's time to take those uniforms, citations, letters and pictures out of the attic trunk or cedar closet and share your pride with members of our community. We have some previous family contributions already in our archives but we are hoping you will consider loaning yours for this exhibit. Do you have a family connection to serving in the Revolution, Civil War, Spanish American, WWI and WWII, either in the service or here on the home front? Our archives contain very little on the Korean War and our most recent involvements in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and 9-11.

We need your help building the exhibit. Please consider a loan to the museum from late April for a Memorial Day weekend start. The exhibit will run through the summer, concluding in the fall, 2026. Please contact Bob Krol at [info@gbhistory.org](mailto:info@gbhistory.org) to let him know what you would like to contribute to the exhibit.



## Historical Society Legacy Members

Do you have a desire to make a lasting difference? History is a record of individual accomplishments, efforts, and dreams. As such, you are a part of our town's history. Be part of our effort to ensure that our town's historical heritage is

collected, preserved, protected and shared with future generations. Join with others who are becoming a cherished Historical Society Legacy Member. As you consider your estate planning, please consider a gift to the Great Barrington Historical Society. By planning your charitable contribution to the Historical Society now, you will protect your valuable assets by reducing or eliminating estate and income tax burdens on your family. By informing us of designation you will be included and recognized as a Legacy Member.



*Did you know. . . .*

## **Great Barrington's Original Liberty Pole**

**by Gary Leveille**

Have you ever noticed the prominent hill hiding immediately behind Aroma Bar and Grill Indian restaurant? If not, the next time you approach the Route 7 & 23 rotary, CAREFULLY take a look. For centuries, this blue dolomite knoll has been known as Mount Peter. It was likely named after Revolutionary War patriot Peter Ingersoll who once owned it and lived nearby.

Back in the 1800s, there was a clear view from atop Mount Peter looking west toward the Taconic mountain range, and north toward the present-day Searles Castle grounds. Although privately owned, the hilltop was a popular spot for picnicking and sight-seeing. The craggy eminence once served as a rendezvous site for Native Americans. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, numerous stone projectile points, as well as a large mortar and pestle were found at the base of the hill.

According to author, poet, essayist, and suffragist Elizabeth Porter Gould (who referenced Great Barrington town historian Charles Taylor), Mount Peter was also the site of a Revolutionary War-era flag raising controversy.

In the mid-1770s, hostilities were heating up between local British Loyalists (aka Tories) and Patriots. A so-called Liberty Pole and flag were mounted atop the incline by enthusiastic Patriots. But under the cover of darkness, Tories hiked up the hill and toppled the flagpole. Undeterred, the Patriots later lashed the pole and banner to a treetop, and discouraged further Tory tampering by tapping the tree trunk with sharp iron spikes.

As the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence approaches, the Great Barrington Historical Society will dedicate a new Liberty Pole along with a Liberty Elm Tree at its museum on South Main Street. Look for details elsewhere in this issue.



# Where Are You?



Hint: The house is no longer there, but in 1884, you wouldn't need a statue to sit next to him. *Answer on next page*

*Photo courtesy of Southern Berkshires Through Time by Gary Leveille*



The Society is always looking for new Board of Director members and volunteers to be part of our Society and museum's continued growth and service to the community. If you are interested in local history and are looking for a creative outlet for your energies, please consider joining the Board. There is no money or residency longevity requirements - just a desire to donate your time and energy to a worthy cause. Volunteers are needed to help give tours at the museum, help create displays and exhibits, help at tag sales, help with letter writing, etc. we can put your talent to good use. Contact Bob at [info@gbhistory.org](mailto:info@gbhistory.org) to join in or for more information.

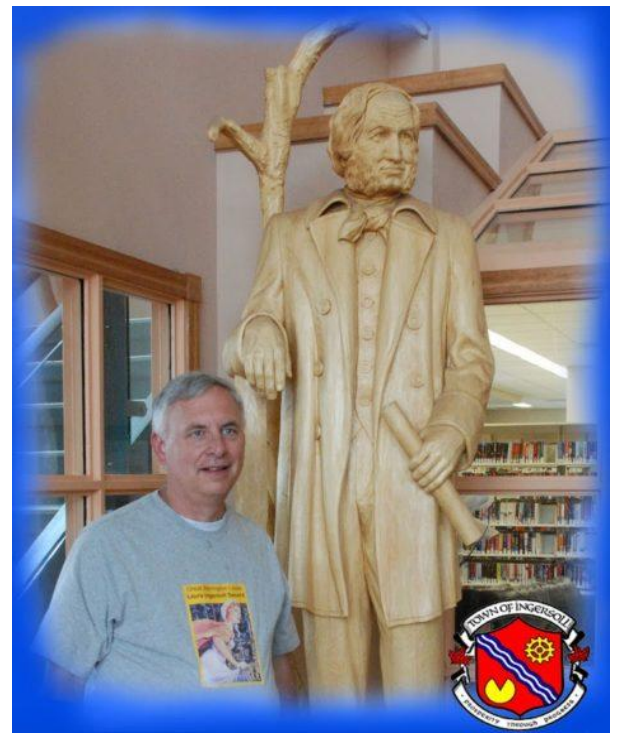


## Answer to Where Are You?

This was the home of Patriot Major Thomas Ingersoll and his daughter Laura. The house stood on the site of the present day Mason Library. Laura Ingersoll Secord is a legend in Canada, celebrated nationwide as a heroine of the War of 1812. Several schools in Canada are named after her, and monuments in Ontario also can be seen. She was featured on 1992 and 2003 stamps, and one of Canada's favorite candies is named after her. A plaque honors her at the Mason Library and our museum features a Secord exhibit.



Here's a picture of our very own Gary Leveille in the town of Ingersoll, Canada standing next to the statue of Thomas Ingersoll of Great Barrington.



# What's on display at the Museum



Sandy Magdalenski Pazzetto, 1960 graduate from Searles donated this gym attire worn in gym class minus the matching bloomers. We've come a long way!



This cast iron bridge sign comes from the old Pumpkin Hollow Bridge located over the Green River off Route 71. Donated by Jim Reynolds, along with pictures of the bridge, he also relates the story of how he obtained the sign.



OH NO!  
I FORGOT ...  
SOMETHING ...  
... BUT WHAT ?

## It's not too late to become a GBHS 2026 Member

Join now! Go to our website at [www.gbhistory.org](http://www.gbhistory.org) and click on donation to enroll or pick up a membership form at the museum. Also, keep track of our home page as we work to improve and update information about your GBHS.

# Catching Up with our Archivist Kerry Lydon



Greetings from the depths of the GBHS archives!

Now that I'm 17 months in, I can confidently say that I've located and reviewed thousands of documents, photographs, and objects that have been given to the Society since 1977 (barring the discovery of a secret closet filled with additional items). I'm currently working on processing (making accessible for researchers) a collection of family papers and photos given to us about 10 years ago. One particularly amusing read was a letter from the 1930s, where a 15-year-old local girl playfully makes a case to her mother to let her leave the house after being grounded. The fact that her mother kept it for several decades after, makes me think her appeal was successful.

I can genuinely say I really enjoy my work here. On days when I'm really on a roll, I'm eager to go to bed, not because I'm tired, but because I want to get sleeping out of the way and get back to work. It's a privilege to be able to feel that way about my work, and one I won't take for granted.



The Great Barrington Historical Society (GBHS) is very pleased to have Kerry Lydon as our professional archivist. Previously, our ever-growing collection became overwhelming for the part-time volunteers who labored to organize it. The work Kerry is now doing is a massive undertaking to fully catalog and process our huge collection of artifacts, business and organization records, manuscripts, books, documents, textiles and photographs. These treasures have been accumulating since GBHS was founded in 1977, and include primary source documents dating back to the 1700s.

In an agreement made in 1979, the Ramsdell Library invited the town's Historical Commission and the non-profit Historical Society to use the second floor of the Ramsdell as the town museum, archive, and to hold Society meetings and programs there. Years later, a change in state law prevented our public programs from being held there because of accessibility issues - no elevator. The town museum is now located at the Wheeler Farmstead on South Main Street. Although there is space there for displays, there is little extra room for our archives. Therefore, most of our important collections remain archived in multiple hundreds of boxes at our second-floor location at the Ramsdell Library.

Recent comments have been made in the news that may give our readers the impression that our collection there is helter-skelter and mindless storage. That is not the case as these photos of our neatly organized textile and Tassone photo collections illustrate. Archival work, preservation and cataloging is ongoing on the second-floor of Ramsdell. The long-term goal is to finally make our collections accessible to researchers, students and historians. Our thanks go out to the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area

(Housatonic Heritage) for funding Kerry's work and to our own Gary Leveille and Marilyn Bisiewicz for their hard work as volunteers in this effort.



# Our Thank You to our 2026 Members

We want to take a moment to thank all of you who cared enough to become 2026 members of the Great Barrington Historical Society during our annual membership campaign. Our annual drive is our largest source of income. Please know that your donation is so appreciated. Without you there would be no Historical Society.

Another important source of revenue is the money we raise at our special events. Our Barn Sales and Book Nook are major fund-raisers supported by the wonderful re-saleable donations we receive from the community and the dedication of our volunteer workers. We also sell some of those items on eBay and in our museum gift area. Another important source of income is the program and museum tour donations we receive throughout the year and especially during our Christmas exhibit that draws many out-of-town visitors.

We would also like to thank the local businesses and organizations in our communities for their continued support of the Historical Society. As a former business owner in Great Barrington, I realize that these businesses are asked for donations from many non-profit organization and school groups in the area. For them to donate to the Society demonstrates their care for our town's history. Please remember these businesses when you shop, dine or are in need of a service.

A special thank you to:

**Arienti Monument Company**  
**Berkshire Building Movers LLC**  
**First Congregational Church**  
**H. B. Foster Mechanical**  
**Mahaiwe Tent**  
**Pamela Sandler Architect LLC**  
**Law Office of Susan Smith**  
**Wheeler & Taylor Inc.**

**Barrington Brewery**  
**Berkshire Corporation**  
**Great Barrington Rotary Club**  
**Howard Mott Rare Books**  
**Norbert's Locksmith Service**  
**Seekonk Tree Farm**  
**Timpane Construction, Inc.**

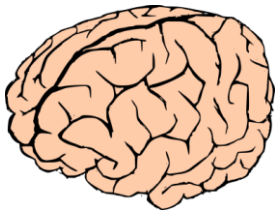
**Berkshire Aviation LLC**  
**Domaney's Liquors & Fine Foods**  
**Greylock Federal Credit Union**  
**John B. Hull**  
**Ted Okun Services**  
**Shoval Foundation**  
**Thursday Morning Club**



## Recent Museum Improvements

Improvements to the museum's main house continue thanks to our Community Preservation Act and Cultural Council Grants. Insulation work is the most recent focus which will lead to better climate control and hopefully lower heating and cooling costs. Pictures on the left show work being done on the second floor of the wagon house addition. Insulation and flooring is being installed to not only insulate the main floor room below, but also make it possible for light storage on the second level. The picture on the right shows the main front street entry door. What you see is a wooden "storm door" which is an exact replica of the historic door inside.





# Massachusetts Born Brain Teaser

Give your brain a workout as there is nothing easy about this teaser! Even the clues make you ponder!

Proud to be from Massachusetts! Match the Massachusetts born person with their role in history and popularity. Extra points if you know where they were born.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Emily Dickinson

A. Live Long and Prosper

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. John Adams

B. Quote the Raven

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Dr. Suess

C. Gift of Gab

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Ben Franklin

D. "Let my people go"

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Edgar Allen Poe

E. ...—...

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Robert Goddard

F. The Brockton Bomber

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Samuel Morse

G. Peach Basket Hoops

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Clara Barton

H. "They shut me up in prose"

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Rocky Marciano

I. All children should go to school

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. James Naismith

J. Summered in Maine

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. Conan O'Brien

K. Brother fought with John Brown

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. Susan B. Anthony

L. Some Like It Hot

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. Horace Mann

M. Battlefield Angel

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. Leonard Nimoy

N. We have ignition

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. Eli Whitney

O. First to Sign

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. George H.W. Bush

P. Growing cotton became profitable

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. Cecil B. DeMille

Q. Disco Queen

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. Jack Lemmon

R. Oh, The Places You'll Go

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. John Hancock

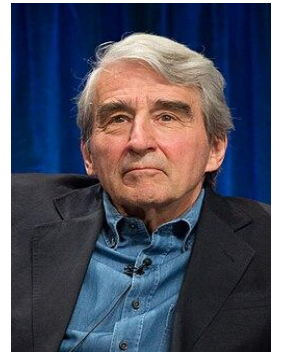
S. First Father-Son Leaders

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. Donna Summer

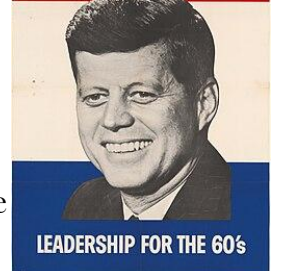
T. Poor Richard



**Great Barrington**



**Cambridge**

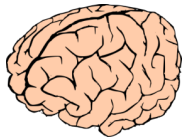


**Brookline**



**Newton**

Answers on top of next page - Don't peek!



Answers to Brain Teaser:

1H (Amherst), 2S (Quincy), 3R (Springfield), 4T (Boston), 5B (Boston), 6N (Worcester), 7E (Charlestown), 8M (Oxford), 9F (Brockton), 10G (Springfield), 11C (Brookline), 12K (Adams), 13I (Franklin), 14A (Boston), 15P (Westboro), 16J (Milton), 17D (Ashfield), 18L (Newton), 19O (Braintree), 20Q (Boston)

FYI Pictures top to Bottom:

W.E.B. Dubois, Sam Waterston (Law and Order), John F. Kennedy, and Matt Leblanc (Friends) Write me at [info@gbhistory.org](mailto:info@gbhistory.org) for a quick explanation of the clues that puzzled you.



## 2026 is a great year for Reading about our Local History!

Here at the museum we have a large selection of local history books authored by our own Bernard Drew, Gary Leveille and David Rutstein. We also have hard-to-find copies of the 1961 and 2011 town Centennial books, St. James Parish book and even a few used copies of the rare Charles Taylor's book *The History of Great Barrington 1676-1922* published in 1928. Stop in to our gift shop at the museum and pick out your spring reading - they make great gifts! Checks or cash only.

### *A Message from the director...*

2026 is going to be a great year as we celebrate our Nation's birth and our very own local history. I am so excited about our "Freedom isn't Free" exhibit and what treasures the community will loan to the museum to help us celebrate their family's role in history. My father served in World War II in Europe and my mother contributed to the war effort working at the Springfield Armory. Their efforts demonstrate the importance of the role the everyday American family played in safeguarding our freedom. That sacrifice has been part of the American story in every time of peril since the Revolution and even through 9-11. What is your family's contribution and sacrifice? Please help us tell their story. "Together, We Make History."

Bob Krol