

Oakham Historical Association

P.O. Box 236, 1221 Old Turnpike Road, Oakham, MA 01068 • 508-882-3111
www.oakhamhistory.com (*in progress*) E-mail: admin@oakhamhistory.com

June 2014 Issue 60

The Oakham Historical Museum is one of the town's oldest buildings. Although the exact date on which it was built is unknown, it is recorded in a land transfer on August 25, 1773.



The building has a rich history of revolutionary conspiracies, home of the Fobes family, and as the town's first Post Office.

It now serves as a meeting place for the OHA and a museum for everyone to enjoy.

Officers:

Jeffrey Young, *President*
William Mucha, *Vice-President*
Helen Bechan, *Secretary*
Kathryn Young, *Treasurer*
Linda Housman, *Curator*

Directors :

Wesley Dwelly
Eva Grimes
Kenneth Housman

Work Meetings: 1st Wed, 7pm
Regular Meetings: 3rd Wed, 7pm

Upcoming Events

June 2

5th Grade Historical Walk

June 21, 5-11p

Oakham Block Party
Strawberry Festival
www.oakham-ma.gov

June 22, 1-4p

Museum open

July 26, 9a-4p

Oakham Youth Fair
Animals, vegetables, flowers

July 27, 1-4p

Museum open

August 9, 8a-4p

(rain date August 16)

1774 Walk for Independence
Oakham to Worcester
16.5 miles
Registration form attached.

August 23, 8a-3p

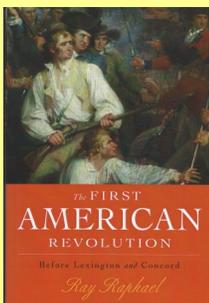
Town-Wide Yard Sale

August 24, 1-4p

Museum open

September 7, 11a-5p

A daylong celebration of
Worcester Revolution 1774
www.revolution1774.org



Memorial Day Address

Jeffrey Young

We gather on Memorial Day to honor those members of our town who have served their country in preserving our freedom. We've celebrated the bravery of these soldiers and mourned their loss. But where did this spirit originate? And how did we first gain this freedom that those brave men and women fight to protect? The answer may surprise you.

Through our history education, we've learned about the events that led to "The shot heard 'round the world" at Lexington and Concord. Taxation without representation. The Stamp Act. The Boston Massacre. The Boston Tea Party

These events were mostly spurred by the burden of additional taxes. Where the colonists really lost their freedom was with the passage of the Coercive Acts by Parliament. Through this legislation the British Crown would appoint not only the Governor of the Massachusetts Colony, but all the councilors as well. And the Governor then had the authority to appoint all the judges and other court officers at Superior and Inferior levels.

Now the people had no representation in their own colonial legislature, had lost any link to the power of the court system, and while they could elect their own Selectmen, all meeting agendas required prior approval by the Governor. No freedom to govern themselves in any way.

Due to the growing number of issues during the early 1770s, towns in Massachusetts started forming Committees of Correspondence, sort of an information network. This began in towns around Boston in late 1772, and swept westward. Soon after, towns began forming militia units, often training on the Town Green.

The Coercive Acts were passed in May of 1774. At that time the court system in each county had certain weeks when it was in session. The date for the Worcester County court session to begin was September 6th of that year. The Committees of Correspondence went into action, and organizers rallied the militia units in the surrounding towns, including Oakham. When the judges and magistrates showed up that day to proclaim court was in session, they were greeted by over 4,600 unarmed, but well-organized militia; organized so they would not appear as a mob, and unarmed because word had spread that no British troops would be accompanying the court officers. The court did not open.

Records show that 50 men from Oakham's militia were involved in the event at Worcester that day in 1774. And it could be said that Oakham and other towns in Worcester County had regained some of their freedom seven months before The Shot Heard 'Round the World.

This year marks 240 years since that peaceful uprising in Worcester. A reenactment is scheduled for September 7th. On August 9th, a group of us will be reenacting the 16.5 mile militia march as part of the county-wide celebration.

May 26, 2014

The Evolution of the Revolution of 1774

Why would 50 men from Oakham march all the way to Worcester to close down the only court in the County? Oakham was barely 12 years old at the time. This little farm community hadn't even reached the terrible teens yet when children are inclined to rebel against their parents and all authority. So why did Oakham and 36 other towns on September 6, 1774 send over 4,600 men to the county shire town to oppose the most powerful empire in the world?

The residents of Oakham had been electing town officials and governing themselves for more than a decade under the 1691 charter. This charter combined the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the Plymouth Colony, the Province of Maine, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick into one governing body: the "Province of Massachusetts Bay".

Under this Provincial charter the Governor was appointed by the British Crown. The Legislature (General Court), however, was elected by the people and was responsible for choosing members for the Governor's Council. The judges, justices of the peace, sheriffs, marshals and other court officials were appointed by the Governor, but with the approval of the Governor's Council. The General Court was locally chosen which provided some control over the court system and also possessed the powers of appropriation. The purse strings were thus in control of elected officials, providing a check and balance on the Crown's appointed officials.

1765 March 22: The British Parliament, without the approval of the Colonial legislature, passed the Stamp Act which required colonists to pay a tax on almost every piece of paper used for legal documents. Among the long list of affected documents were wills, licenses, newspapers, diplomas, court orders, ship's papers, almanacs and even dice and playing cards. This drew strong resistance in Massachusetts, resulting in the destruction of stamps and the forced resignation of many stamp distributors.

1766 March 18: The Stamp Act was quickly repealed.

1767 June 29: The Townshend Revenue Act is passed. This bill imposed a heavy import tax on British goods and when the Provincial legislature opposed this new tax the Crown threatened to dissolve that governing body.

1768 October: British troops arrive in Boston to enforce the laws of the British Crown which most of the province was trying to repeal.



1770 March 5: A Boston "mob" surrounded a British sentry and began to harass him. When other British soldiers came to the sentry's aid the "mob" began to throw snowballs, sticks and rocks at the soldiers. A handful of the British troops fired into the crowd, killing five civilians and wounding six others. This act of violence on civilians became known as the Boston Massacre. Ironically, John Adams defended the accused soldiers and was able to obtain their acquittal and release.

1772 September: The Crown decided to pay the salaries of the judges which meant that there was no longer any local control of the judicial purse strings.

1772 November: "Radicals" in Boston formed a "Committee of Correspondence" and wrote a letter, called the "Boston Pamphlet", listing their grievances with the British Crown and distributed it to all 260 towns in the Province. Soon other Committees of Correspondence sprang up across the Province to express their concerns.

1773 May 10: The British Parliament passed the Tea Act which eventually led to the Boston Tea Party in December of that same year. Although the Tea Act actually reduced the price of tea, it created a British monopoly on imported tea and increased the refrains of "Taxation without Representation" since the colonies had no control over the British Parliament or its taxes. The Boston Tea Party involved between 50 and 100 men, who boarded several ships in Boston harbor and tossed their entire cargos of tea into the water. This act of "wanton destruction of private property" so incensed the British Crown that they took drastic steps to take control of the situation.

1774 May 20: The British parliament passed what were called the "Coercive Acts" in England but known as the "Intolerable Acts" in the Province. The Boston Port Bill was designed to close off all imports and exports, in and out of Boston Harbor, but the straw that broke the camel's back was the Massachusetts Government Act. The British Crown (George III) would not only appoint the Governor, but he would also appoint the Councilors. The Governor would have full authority to appoint the Chief Justice and judges of the superior court, remove and appoint the judges of the inferior court, appoint the Attorney General, marshals, justices of peace and other officers of the court.

General Thomas Gage, the military commander of the British forces in the Province, soon replaced Governor Thomas Hutchinson as governor. The legislature and Governor's Council were both dissolved, leaving the towns with no say in the Provincial government. The Massachusetts Government Act also took some control over town meetings in Oakham and every other town in the Province. Even though each town was still allowed to elect its own selectmen and town officers once a year, it could not call any meeting without written consent from the governor, and all agenda items had to be approved by the governor.

The selectmen could not now call their own meetings, the citizens had no say as to whom the Provincial office holders would be and they had no control over the judicial system. Oakham lost the independence it had strived to attain just twelve years before. Rising debts among farmers in Oakham, as in the rest of the Province, were growing, and going to court to resolve these issues became a major concern. Losing their land and/or going to prison were distinct possibilities, of which they now had virtually no control.

1774 August 6: The Massachusetts Government Act went into effect and ten days later the first court session, which was to be held at Great Barrington in Berkshire County, was closed down by 1500 patriots.

1774 August 30: About 3000 citizens convened at the Springfield courthouse where the justices "decided" not to hold court under the "ACT". On that same day a county convention was held in Worcester with 130 people attending. The next scheduled court was set to convene in Worcester, and General Gage had threatened to keep that court open with force if necessary. It was recommended that if they received word of British troops marching towards Worcester, the towns should come to the county seat, properly armed in order to repel any hostile forces.

1774 September 1: General Gage was becoming more concerned about the local militias who were arming themselves and stockpiling gun powder. He decided to send 260 British regulars to Charlestown to confiscate 250 barrels of powder. This in turn convinced the patriots that the British were preparing for an attack and a "Powder Alarm" was issued. Thousands of militiamen mobilized. At this point Gage knew he did not have enough manpower to quell the growing hatred of British rule. Instead of attacking, he decided to fortify Boston in preparation of an attack.

1774 September 6: 4,622 militiamen from 37 towns converged at the Worcester Court House that infamous day but General Gage didn't. When it became known that British forces would not march to Worcester, the 1774 organizers asked each town's militia to leave their weapons behind. Every militiaman followed the orders of his superior officer and acted in a professional manner so as not to give the slightest impression that these were the actions of an unruly mob. Not a single shot was fired. In one short month the British magistrates were driven out of Berkshire County, Hampshire County and Worcester County. The Revolutionary War had not officially begun yet but General Gage had already lost all the territory from Worcester County and westward. No British troops ever set foot in Worcester County again, except as captives held in the Continental Prison Barracks on Charnock Hill in Rutland.



The "shot heard 'round the world" was still more than seven months away but Oakham had already regained its freedom. The 50 men from Oakham who marched to Worcester that day shared in gaining this freedom. *Lee Dougan*

Behind the Scenes

Spring Cleaning: *Linda Housman, Sue Jensen, Shirley Smith*
 Grass Cutting: *Jeff Young*
 Dressing the Mannequins: *Linda Saupé & Linda Housman*
 Bunting on Museum Porch: *Helen & Howard Bechan*
 Memorial Day Setup: *Ken & Linda Housman, Lee Dougan, Helen Bechan, Linda & Tom Saupé*

Featured Artifacts

The Museum has a variety of musical instruments in its collection and displays them alongside framed photos of Oakham's early bands. The collection includes cornets, trombones, bugle, clarinet, fife, and an ophicleide. During the 1800s, several bands were organized in Oakham, among them the Oakham Cornet Band and Packard's Brass Band. The bands enjoyed favorable reputations in town and in neighboring towns, often being hired for special events and holidays.



Bell-back instrument played by the Hon. Moses O. Ayres (1826-1895) in the Oakham Brass Band. The Ayres family was remarkably gifted in musical ability. Moses O. Ayres was also a leading businessman and one whose judgment was often sought by those in trouble. He was town moderator for more than twenty years, and Representative and State Senator.



Cornet owned and played by William Sanford Crawford

Mr. Crawford (1831-1916) was a talented musician and leader of the Oakham Cornet Band for 33 years. His cornet was made by the Conn Co., one of the top instrument companies. It was bought at auction ca. 1928 by Charlie Daniels for \$5. Eventually, it was given to Laureston Sanford Crawford, who donated it to the Museum in 2000.



Do You Know...What the odds are that three men from the small town of Oakham serving in three different military units became prisoners of war in World War II, and that Mr. Edwards and Mr. Stone ended up together in StalagVII-A ?

The Barre Gazette, May 24, 1945

S-Sgt. Edwards Liberated

[U.S. Army Air Corps]

Mr. & Mrs. Stanley (Sierczkowski) Edwards of East Hill Road, Oakham, have received word from their son, S-Sgt. John S. Edwards, that he has been liberated from a German prisoner of war camp. His message read: "I am safe and unhurt and am no longer a prisoner of war. I am very anxious to hear how everything is back home."



1925—

The Barre Gazette, May 31, 1945

Pvt. Henry W. Stone, Jr. Freed

[U.S. Army]

Pvt. Henry W. Stone, Jr., 27, taken prisoner by the Germans on August 7, 1944, has been liberated, according to a letter received from him on May 24 by his wife, Mrs. Josephine Finn Stone of Boston. His battalion became known as "The Lost Battalion." He wrote from Germany and said he hoped to be home soon.



1918—2012

The Barre Gazette, May 24, 1945

Sergt. Troy is Freed

[U.S. Army Air Force]

Mrs. Francis A. Troy [Ann Daniels], of Oakham has received a telegram from her husband, S/Sgt. Troy, 29, saying that he has been liberated from a German prison camp. He has been a prisoner since February 1944. He is a son of Mrs. Marguerite Troy, of Oakham and has a daughter, Mary Troy, 3.



1915—2011

The military service of Oakham's 48 men and women who served in World War II and the 24 men and women who served during the Korean Conflict is printed in "Oakham Veterans Of World War II and The Korean Emergency," by Dorothy P. Day, 1959. Their amazing stories are a must-read. Books are available at \$20, plus \$3 postage if mailed. OHA, P.O. Box 236, Oakham, MA 01068

From *The Massachusetts Spy*, Worcester, July 30, 1875: **Oakham.**

A tramp passed through the town last week, and in attempting to stop at the house of Mr. Reuben Dean, was met by the dog belonging to the house. Mrs. Dean being near attempted to take the dog by the collar, and as she did so the man drew a pistol and shot the dog dead on the spot, and told Mrs. Dean if she did not go into the house and mind her own business he would shoot her. Mr. Dean being away from home was immediately sent for, and with Constable Ayres and some of the neighbors started in pursuit. They followed the man within half mile of Coldbrook Village, when coming probably too near him the villain took to the woods. They have put the case into Deputy Bothwell's hands, with the expectation that the tramp will be speedily brought to justice. The affair has caused a great deal of excitement.

OHA 20-20 Lottery Winners 2014

Our annual lottery fundraiser began January 9th and ended May 22nd. We hope you'll try your luck again in December when we offer the 20-20 fundraiser for 2015. We truly appreciate your support.

Oakham winners: Dick Bechan, Linda Housman, Scott Leblanc, James Willard (twice), and Claudia Lacerte.

Out of town winners: Robert Williams (Barre), Robert Croteau (Attleboro), Lisa Grimaldi (Phoenix), John Humphreys (Jamaica Plain), Greg Mathis (Phoenix), Sylvia Buck (Warren), Shirley Smith (Barre), Sue Jensen (Laguna Beach, CA), Glen Leblanc (Whitinsville), Thomas Cooper (Charlton), Pam Moore (Auburn), Donna Bechan (Barre), and Paula Rodrigues (Johnston, RI).

Annual Town Wide Yard Sale

While spring cleaning and/or trying to downsize, have you found some no longer wanted treasures that others might enjoy? Our solution to this dilemma is to join us in the OHA annual town-wide yard sale to be held on **Saturday, August 23, 2014.**

The Association will handle all the advertisements, publicity, maps, inquiries and signs for a small fee of \$15 per registration.



All you need do is set up a table in your yard, display your items for sale and greet those who are looking to buy. All participants should be open for business by 8am and remain open until 3pm.

In order to register your yard sale, please make a check payable to the Oakham Historical Association for \$15 and mail to: Attn: Lucy, Oakham Historical Association, P.O. Box 182, Oakham, MA 01068 on or before Wednesday, Aug. 20, and we will place your yard sale on the map that is distributed to everyone who comes to shop. Last year we gave out over 130 maps to visitors. For further information, call Lucy at 508-882-3358.

One mystery solved—thanks to Bill Morse and Eva Grimes. Front row, seated right, is Alfred B. Morse. Additional research confirmed photo is the 1920 senior class at Holden High School. Mr. Morse was the only Oakham student graduating from HHS that year. The school did not publish a yearbook in 1920, but the *Worcester Telegram* printed the same photo.



Curator's Corner

A sincere thank you to the following people for their recent donations to the Museum.

- **Nancy Kalinick Anderson**, Orleans, MA: A speech written and delivered by her grandfather, Oakham resident Douglas Sinclair Rutherford, at his No. Brookfield High School graduation 1918. He writes about his high school years during WWII.
- **Tom & Linda Saupé**, Oakham: Three photos of a Navy Grumman F6F-5N Hellcat plane that crashed on New Braintree Rd. on Apr. 19, 1945.
- **Eva Grimes**, Oakham: Her WAF uniform (1952-1955) is the first and only woman's uniform in the OHA collection.