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### *First Waltham Historical Society Trolley Tour*

February 27th will see the first Historical Society Trolley Tours in Waltham. The Tour departs from 760 Main Street to travel to Stonehurst and the Watch Factory. Tickets are \$15.00 for members, \$25 for non-members at [Waltham.Historical.Society@gmail.com](mailto:Waltham.Historical.Society@gmail.com) or 617-448-6706.

Edwards Jewelers closed at the end of December. The owners Joel Weiner and Youla graciously donated to the Society the sign, which hung on Moody Street for years, as well as a safe once belonging to the Watch Factory.

We wish to extend thanks to Board Member Larry Logan, and Prime Glass and Mirror for their assistance in removing and saving the sign.

We would also like to thank Bob Marcou of Marcou Jewelers, for donating eleven large glass display cases to the Society.

And thanks go to Bob Lucas for allowing us to store the safe until we find a home.

### *The Edmund L. Sanderson Lecture Series*

*Presents*

*Mr. Joseph Keefe*

*with*

## **Nathaniel P. Banks and the Civil War**

This lecture will focus on Congressman and former Governor Nathaniel P. Banks and his time as a Major General of volunteers. We will focus on his Civil War activities, including his installment as a Major General (with no military experience) by President Lincoln in May of 1861. We will follow his campaigns from the first command in Annapolis, Maryland to the Shenandoah Valley, where he would fight against Confederate General Stonewall Jackson. Learn of his command of the Army of the Gulf in Louisiana, the invasion of Texas, the Red River campaign, and his administration of Louisiana for President Lincoln. We will examine his career through the Civil War and its aftermath.

Please join us to learn more about General Banks as Joe Keefe, Archives Specialist at the National Archives tells his story. This interesting lecture will begin at 7:00 pm in the Community Room of the RTN Federal Credit Union, 600 Main Street in Waltham. Plan to arrive early in order to get a good seat. This lecture is free and open to the public. And there may be a surprise during the evening. If you have any questions please call 617-448-6706.

# A Letter from Walter L. Peirce on His Visit to Waltham England

*The following is a letter written to Past Historical Society President Joan Sheridan from Member Mr. Walter Peirce. Mr. Peirce passed away on January 1, 2010, shortly after his 100th birthday, and receiving the Bronze Star earned during his service in World War II.*

*The Society is grateful to Maureen Gordon for retyping the letter for this publication.*

MS JOAN SHERIDAN – Waltham Historical Society

This concerns my side trip to Waltham Cross (and/or Waltham Abbey) England – Mid 1945

When the hostilities were practically over in the ETO on or about May 7, 1945, I was somewhere between Dachau and Munich in Bavaria, and the manpower of my outfit – the 542nd Field Artillery Battalion of the 42nd Rainbow Division – was bedraggled, dirty, exhausted and badly in need of Rest and Rehabilitation – R & R, as we called it, and as soon as the procedural ramifications were ironed out, one of my duties was to get a program arranged to send about twenty deserving GIs on a trip to London. There are five batteries in a battalion and two trucks departed at weekly intervals to drive via the autobahn to Paris where they waited for night transportation to Etritat for showers, new uniforms and off again, on again, gone again Finegan to Le Harve and a short boat trip to Southampton and eventually London.

These were fun times and when it came close to the time I would be transferred into an outfit headed for home, my Commanding Officer suggested that it was close to now or never so I took one of the trips myself.

I could write a book about the various things I saw or did (like the one whole day at leisure in Paris) but the purpose of this epistle is to tell you about my side trip to the Walthams in England.

When we arrived in London we were whisked right up to a place like the Y. M.C.A. which was set up as a housing, meeting and recreational establishment where you hung your hat at times. There were tickets available for entertainments, shows, side trips and the like. The changing of the guard was a thing to see. Folks were more than willing to talk and the population was now predominantly female because their men folk were in the military and still on duty in all directions. Food was scarce and expensive. If you made friends with home folks, it was polite to take them to the Y for a snack rather than expect them to use their ration stamps to feed you. We were Yanks to them and there were a few from below the Mason-Dixon line who were not impressed by the salutation, “Hi, Yank”.

When things quieted down, I went to the desk and asked how far it was to Waltham and found it was not very far and there was a regular train service. A young girl about 70 held sway at the desk and got very excited when I asked her if she might be able to locate the Honorable Joseph Beasley Franklin by telly. (That is the way I remember his name but I may have the cart before the horse.) Finally, she beckoned and I was surprised to find she has His Honor on the phone. He was the Mayor of Waltham Cross, England back at the time Waltham, Massachusetts was celebrating their sesquicentennial or some such holiday celebration and was the guest of our fair city. When I told him who I was, he was thrilled and wanted me to pay him a visit. This was easy to arrange and the girl at the desk was more than pleased to arrange a schedule and the next day I was at the station waiting for the proper toot.

There was the normal hustle and bustle at the station and everyone wanted to assist and make things comfortable. The conductor enquired about my destination and said he knew just where to let me off and would notify me in plenty of time. He said one of his good friends had

migrated to a town named Chicago and wondered if I happened to know him. Someone else had an uncle in Cleveland – I couldn’t recall ever meeting these people but assured them if I did, I’d tell them I had enjoyed a furlough in their neck of the woods.

When I arrived at my destination, the Honorable Mr. Franklin was waiting for me. It was some years since I had seen him but he looked hale and hearty although he said he was suffering from the shingles. Later on in years I found out just how much it could bother and feel sorry for anyone who has to bear it.

He gave me a hearty welcome and drove me to his home where his family business was the combination of florist and farmer which was regulated at that time. A florist had to share his planting between the two because of the lack of manpower which [was due] to the feverish business of the industrial shortages caused by an all out war. He showed me myriad pictures, plaques, artifacts, gifts and letters he had received from his friends from everywhere, particularly from Waltham, Massachusetts. The London area had taken a terrific pasting from Hitler’s bombers and there was much evidence of the damage, particularly to bridges, railways and the industries.

He hastened to show me the lorry (I think he called it) that the Waltham Chamber of Commerce and the City of Waltham had donated to help the harried and unfortunate victims of air raids who were injured or in great need of food, water, fuel, clothing, medicine or a pat on the back. The wardens were constantly on the go and the services rendered by the emergency wagon were deeply appreciated. He made me promise to go to the City Hall in Waltham and deliver his personal gratitude to the Mayor. He wanted me to remember him to his great friend Patsy Duane. (Actually, I don’t think Patsy was Mayor at the time of his memorable visit but I remember him [Patsy] all dolled out in formal wear topped with a shiny

silk hat – he was a favorite with the kids because he could always find time to pick up a kid thumbing a ride.) I did go to City Hall and our mayor was very pleased to receive his heartfelt thanks. Also the Waltham Chamber of Commerce.

When His Honor was being feted and entertained, my father went to the Arnold Arboretum and got an Amur Cork Tree which he presented as a memento. By that time that small shrub had grown to the size of a house and was surrounded with a fence and was identified with a placque.

When we had a break and a restful moment he suggested a game of cribbage and said we might wager a shilling. After a few games and my donation of a shilling after each game, it was my time for departure. He loaned me his bike and said just leave it at the station. This had been quite a memorable day.



Walter L. Peirce

{Handwritten Note from Walter}:

*I wrote and rewrote this a half dozen times because my memory keeps coming up with tidbits. I had intended to just describe my visit to Waltham Cross.*

## Thank You to Marie Daly

The Waltham Historical Society is grateful to Marie Daly for stepping in at the very last minute to present “Great Dividends: Researching Land in a New England Community” at our January lecture. The scheduled lecturer, Dr. John MacCauley was stricken ill just prior to the date. When Marie was asked if she could present to our members on such short notice, she responded immediately and prepared her presentation.

Even though she was suffering from a severe cold, she nevertheless delivered an interesting and informative lecture that was enjoyed by all.

Thank you Marie! Your aide was greatly appreciated.

## The Historical Commission

By Laura Bernstein

Status of Historic Properties Threatened by Demolition:

–546 Moody St. (Brooks House): Demolition Delay expired, but this and nearby buildings are protected until TD Bank receives all permits for its proposed branch at that site. Permit decisions by Council sub-committees have been delayed due to low attendance.

–Demolition Delays remain in effect on 385 & 1767 Trapelo Road until mid-June.

### Wellington House:

The renovation of this City-owned house, should be completed in two+ years. Al Aydelot & Associates has been selected to plan and implement the remaining renovations. A preliminary design by these architects will be presented at the March 8 WHC meeting.

Discussions between WHC Chair Angie Emberley and the Mayor resulted in a proposal that WHC would oversee the use of Wellington House, and have its headquarters there. WHC voted to accept this proposal. As with the City-owned Paine Estate, the City will provide funds for basic maintenance.

### Possible Local Historic Districts:

Local Historic Districts are City by-laws which empower committees governing such districts to control external changes to, and demolitions of, buildings within the districts. Instituting LHDs provides tools to preserve historic structures, beyond the 6-month Demolition Delay Ord..

In 2007 WHC proposed to the Mayor that work begin on two LHDs: Ellison Park/Lyman St. and Piety Corner. There is also interest in another LHD on Moody St., which would make income-producing historic buildings eligible for Federal & MA tax credits for renovations.

The Mayor has urged WHC to pursue creating LHDs. WHC Chair Emberley will try to locate records of the past proposals, to help move forward on LHDs.

## Special Notes:

### Images by H.F. Warren

The Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation, 154 Moody Street. View enlargements of photos by Waltham photographer H.F. Warren, including what is claimed to



be the last photograph taken of Abraham Lincoln before his assassination. These are images from the collection of the Waltham Historical Society. Call for hours and information 781-893-5410.

### 760 Main Street

The Waltham Historical Society has a new exhibit at our satellite office that is designed to coordinate with the new exhibit opened at the former Waltham Watch Factory.

We have volunteers who open the site on weekends and occasional mornings. Please check our website calendar for days and times.

## An Interesting Clipping:

### PIETY CORNER CLUB WINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

*This clipping was taken from the Woman's Home Companion under the title "Community House" for the January, 1931 Piety Cornerite, Vol. 4 No. 3.*

In the Piety Corner section of Waltham, Massachusetts, a one-room schoolhouse has been converted into a home for an active community club. It is open nearly every day of the year for some type of social activity and has been the means of increasing property values in that locality. A dramatic club, composed of people in the immediate vicinity, gives plays of high order. The women have open house there at least one afternoon each week when they sew, play cards, serve tea and contribute in many ways to a friendly community life.

*Notes: Winifred Kneisel brought in this article to the Historical Society. She believes this was the first community clubhouse in the USA.*

*Please patronize all our sponsors. Without their support, we would be unable to continue our efforts to preserve Waltham's history for future generations.*

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*Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Greene at home*

**The Waltham  
Historical  
Society's 2010  
House Tour  
plans are now  
underway**

The 2010 Tour is seeking homes interested in being featured on our

annual house tour. Please contact Wayne McCarthy at 617-448-6706 or waltham.historical.society@gmail.com for more information.

**"Thank you" to the Waltham  
Historical Society for preserving  
the City's rich legacy!**



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