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*The Edmund L. Sanderson Lecture Series*

*Tuesday, March 10, 2015*

## Graveyard Legends, Symbolism and Lore from the Bay State

*by Roxie J. Zwicker*



Massachusetts's historic graveyards are the final resting places for tales of the strange and supernatural. Gravestones and their carvings tell fascinating stories of history and superstition. This engaging presentation takes guests on a virtual tour of some of the oldest burial grounds and stones of Massachusetts decoding the messages and telling their tales. Gravestone carving is considered by some to be America's first form

of folk art and cemeteries are very much museums in stone.

Ms. Zwicker will have a few snippets of Waltham gravestones and folklore and will have copies of her books available for purchase.

Please join us for this interesting presentation. The lecture will be held at the RTN Federal Credit Union, 600 Main Street (*rear Community Room Entrance*) and will be preceded by a brief business meeting of the Historical Society.

Seating is limited so please arrive between 6:30 and 7:00 PM. The doors will be locked at 7:15. This lecture is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be available.

*The Weathervane is the official publication of the Waltham Historical Society  
190 Moody Street  
Waltham, Massachusetts 02453  
781-891-5815  
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### **About the lecturer**



*Roxie Zwicker is founder of New England Curiosities, a tour and special event company. She is also the published author of 7 books on New England folklore, including the **Massachusetts Book of the Dead**. She has been featured in the **New York Times**, **Boston Herald** and on the **Travel Channel** and the **History Channel**.*

*Roxie also specializes in New England cemetery history, superstition and folklore and she has offered dozens of educational lectures and tours for groups, libraries, schools and colleges.*

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# *From the archives of the Waltham Historical Society*

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May 17, 1922

## IN THE CITY COUNCIL

Shall the city borrow as authorized, for the purpose of acquiring land and for the construction of a City Hall, Memorial Building and other municipal buildings including the cost of original equipment and furnishing same?

By order of the City Council the foregoing question will be submitted to the voters of Waltham at a special election to be held on Tuesday, June 20, 1922.

The authority to borrow for the acquisition of a site and construction of a City Hall and other municipal buildings has been granted by the General Court (Chapter 391, Acts of 1922, Approved May 8, 1922) and the amount which can be so borrowed is limited by this Act to \$750,000. The authority to borrow for the construction of a Memorial Building is found in Chapter 44, Section 8, General Laws and is limited by that act to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1% of the assessed valuation or approximately \$200,000.

If the proposition to take advantage of the authority granted the city should receive the affirmative approval of the voters at the special election, it is the intention of the City Council to proceed at once to acquire the site known as Mt. Pleasant, bounded by Main, Church, School and Liberty Streets and to build thereon a City Hall and a Memorial Building, as soon as, in the judgment of the Council, business conditions would warrant the expenditure. These buildings will occupy the greater part of the Main Street frontage of the block, and the northerly portion will be reserved for future improvements, making of the whole tract an ideal Civic Center.

The tract comprises 173,691 square feet, or slightly more than four acres, and was assessed in 1921 for \$115,000 on land and \$77,900 on buildings, a total valuation of \$192,900.

The reasons which actuated the City Council in selecting this site may be briefly stated as follows: - It is the only tract of land near the center of the city having a natural elevation higher than the surrounding land. It has a frontage on Main Street of nearly 500 feet and is so located as to afford an exceptional opportunity to show the buildings to best advantage. It is the only centrally located plot of sufficient size having no modern or expensive buildings to be removed, and the buildings that now stand on the land, especially those along Main Street front are for the most part old and dilapidated and have long been an eyesore to our citizens and to all who pass through the city over our main thoroughfare. The location is contiguous to a large area already devoted to public or semipublic purposes - schools and churches - and would afford an opportunity for the grouping of these public buildings to the best possible advantage.

The estimated cost of acquiring the site and erecting the two buildings is \$800,000, roughly divided as follows: - land \$250,000, City Hall \$250,000 to \$300,000, Memorial Building \$200,000, grading, street widening and incidentals \$50,000 to \$100,000. The money will be borrowed on twenty-year serial bonds, and at present could doubtless be secured at slightly less than four percent interest. Based in a loan of \$800,000, the annual requirement for serial payments would be \$40,000, and the first annual interest payment would be \$32,000, the average annual interest payment about \$17,600. Our total valuation for 1921, real and personal, was \$40,613,004. On a valuation of 40 millions, every \$1000 expanded means  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cents on the tax rate. Consequently the requirement for the redemption of bonds would theoretically add \$1.00 per year to the tax rate and the interest requirement 80 cents the first year, gradually diminishing as the loan would be reduced by the annual payments.

To offset this possible increase in the tax rate, consideration should be given to the following facts:

(1) The whole sum involved would not be borrowed at once, but only as needed in the progress of the work,

so that it is very improbable that the city would at any one time owe the whole of the proposed loan. Serial payments would begin on a part of the loan before the rest was borrowed.

(2) Many of the dwellings now on the land would be allowed to remain for some years, and the rentals from these buildings would offset the loss of taxes now paid the city and would in part take care of the interest charge.

(3) The figures given are based on our present total valuation. The experience of the other cities leads the Council to believe that the improvement proposed would tend to attract people to our city, to encourage building and to increase values, so that it is not at all certain that the carrying out of the project would cause any noticeable increase in the tax rate as a direct result of the expenditure.

The Council has engaged two architects to prepare preliminary sketches of the buildings in their proposed setting. Their drawings are on exhibition at the Public Library where they can be seen by the public and from them a fairly definite idea can be obtained of the general effect of the proposed improvements.

Signed,

GEORGE R. BEAL, Mayor,

ROBERT L. LYONS,  
JOSEPH M. QUINN,  
GEORGE B. WILLARD,  
ALBERT P. WILLIAMS,  
Councilors.

The foregoing was read and was adopted in the City Council, May 17, 1922.

Attest:

RICHARD STEELE, Clerk.



## The Waltham Historical Society Bright School Report

As you know, the Historical Society has been leasing space at the former Bright School on Grove Street opposite Grove Hill Cemetery. After nearly three years of effort we are getting very close to opening to the public with exhibits and programs designed to continue executing our charge of making the City's history accessible.

We now have painted many of the rooms, installed carpet in rooms for conducting meetings, installed a state-of-the-art security system and had the entrance stairwell flooring installed.

Exhibits are in the final stages of creation with help from the students in the Career and Technical Education program at Waltham High School.

Look for announcements of upcoming events and please consider joining us in our efforts. You can help us in any way that you find enjoyable. There's enough tasks to be done that all assistance will be greatly appreciated.

If you're interested in helping us please contact us at [Waltham.historical.society@gmail.com](mailto:Waltham.historical.society@gmail.com) or 617-448-6706.

We would love to hear from you.

## Inquiry and images from the collection of the Waltham Historical Society

We often receive inquiries on our holdings from folks who find our site on the Internet. This came in and our researchers have not been able to locate anything for Mr. Steven Binger yet. If you have any information we would be most grateful to hear from you at [waltham.historical.society@gmail.com](mailto:waltham.historical.society@gmail.com).

Mr. Binger also sent along a couple of interesting photos shown below.

Attached is a tintype we believe to be of my great uncle George F. Brigden taken in the 1890s(?). He and his brother, Charles Herbert Brigden worked for some years at the Waltham Watch Company. Charles is the one standing, but we do not know the other two. We know that Charles was a member of the Waltham Watch Company Band and we are wondering if perhaps they are wearing band uniforms. Can you verify this?



Also, I am including 3 photos that one of my great uncles, either George or Herbert Brigden, apparently took of a parade in Waltham, obviously on the 4th of July, or perhaps Patriot's Day, late 1800s to perhaps very early 1900s.



Regarding these photos, one of them (left) shows the end of a race with two runners approaching the finish line. Did Pat Carroll and George Tincler ever race in Waltham?

## Become a Board Member of the Waltham Historical Society

*The Nominating Committee will be announcing the slate of officers for the Waltham Historical Society Board of Directors for the term of 2015-2017. If you are interested in becoming more involved, or believe you know a good candidate please contact Joan Sheridan ([jsheridan15@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:jsheridan15@tampabay.rr.com)), Carol DiFranco ([difrancojoecar@verizon.net](mailto:difrancojoecar@verizon.net)) or [waltham.historical.society@gmail.com](mailto:waltham.historical.society@gmail.com). Elections will be held at our Annual May Meeting.*

The Board of Directors of the Waltham Historical Society wishes to express our appreciation for the support of the individuals and organizations listed on this page. They have been very generous to the Historical Society this past year and we encourage you to thank them for their generosity by patronizing the businesses identified, and by expressing thanks to the individuals. Without this type of support the Society would be unable to continue our work in the community.

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**The Rotary Club of Waltham**  
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“Thank you” to the Waltham Historical Society for preserving the City’s rich history.



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