

The Official Newsletter of

The Waltham
Historical Society

WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

September 2010

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The Weathervane is an
official publication of the
Waltham Historical Society
190 Moody Street
Waltham, Massachusetts 02453
781-891-5815
www.walthamhistoricalsociety.org

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Sanderson Lecture Series

7:00 p.m., Tuesday Evening

September 14, 2010

RTN Federal Credit Union
Community Room
600 Main Street
Waltham, MA 02453

The Edmund L. Sanderson Lecture Series Presents



Mr. John Horrigan

with his lecture

"The Year Without A Summer"

The year 1816 was unseasonably cold. It was cold due to a major volcanic eruption combined with a low sunspot count.

Mount Tambora, a stratovolcano in Sumbawa, Indonesia erupted on April 10th, 1815. This blast was heard from 1,600 miles away and pyroclastic flows spread at least twelve miles from the summit, killing almost 10,000 people. The eruption column reached the stratosphere—at an altitude of more than 140,000 feet, creating optical phenomena that bore brilliantly colored sunsets—but brought homely climatic aberrations in 1816.

There were two other factors in play that helped contribute to the sensational unseasonable temperature drops around the world.

Due to unavoidable circumstances Mr. Alex Green was forced to postpone his scheduled presentation until a future date. The Waltham Historical Society is extremely grateful to Mr. Horrigan for stepping in on such short notice.

Sustained periods of weak magnetic activity make the Sun slightly dimmer, so Earth receives less solar light energy. The years 1812-15 were nearly 'spotless', but the year 1816 had a rash of sunspots in the Spring that could easily be seen with the naked eye at sunset.

A third factor was 'inertial solar motion', which is the shifting of the sun's position within our solar system in relation to the earth's revolution around the sun. The temperature shifts were dramatic. In May 1816, frost killed off most of the crops that had been planted in New England. In June two large snowstorms in eastern Canada and New England (including snow in Boston on June 7th) resulted in many failed harvests in the fall.

In July and August, lake and river ice was observed as far south as Pennsylvania. Rapid, dramatic temperature swings were common, with temperatures sometimes reverting from normal or above-normal summer temperatures (as high as 95 °F) to near-freezing within hours.

Join historical astronomer and weather historian John Horrigan as he takes you through the "Year Without a Summer" and parallels it with the current aberrational weather conditions and dormant sunspot period.

The lecture is free and open to the public. It will begin at 7:00 pm in the Richard H. Osborn Community Room of the RTN Federal Credit Union, 600 Main Street (Rear) in Waltham. Please phone 617-448-6706 for more information.

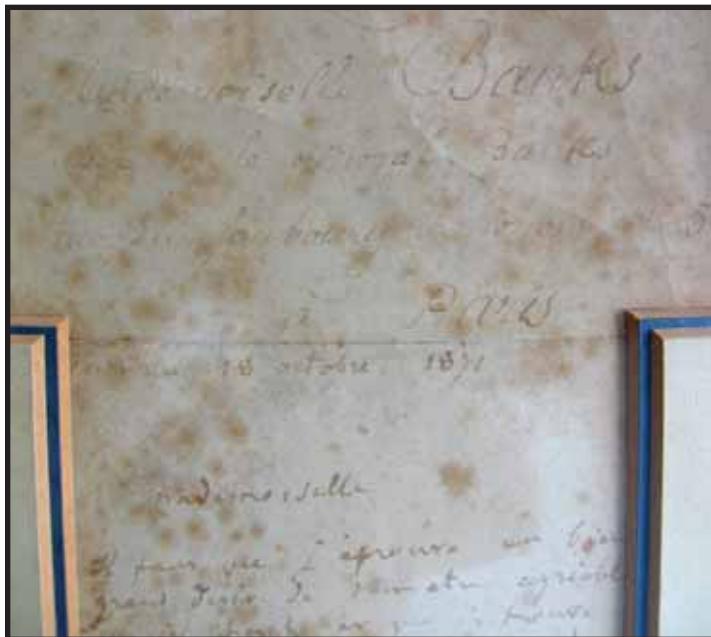
REMINDER! MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE THIS MONTH!

The Waltham Historical Society reminds you that dues are due this month. Please return your renewal slips (enclosed in this newsletter) as soon as possible. Your contribution helps us ensure the continuation of the Edmund L. Sanderson Lecture Series, now marking its 26th presentation. Exhibits at 760 Main Street are also one of the benefits of a fiscally strong Historical Society. We would also encourage you to invite friends to join the Society as well.

19th Century Letter to Mary Banks from the President of France translated

A framed letter written in French accompanied the portrait of Mrs. Mary Banks which the Society purchased at auction. Dr. Helene Day, a Director of the Society, graciously translated this letter. We believe it was written to Mary Binney Banks, the daughter of General and Mrs. Banks, who was about 19 at the time. We are doing further research to establish when, where, and why the family was in France.

If anyone knows any descendants of General Banks, please let Wayne or Sheila know how to contact them, or ask them to contact the Society.



Many thanks to Dr. Day for her work in translating what is a very difficult document to discern. The image above is a small piece of the entire document, and has been enhanced to make it more legible than the original.



The image at left is the portrait which accompanied the letter.

At right is Mary Binney Banks.



le général Banks
rue de Baubourg 58
à Paris

—18 October 1871

Mademoiselle

I must feel a great desire to be agreeable to you because I searchad and I found the time to write to you a few words. I am at work since five o'clock a.m. (in the morning) and in spite of the hardship I succeeded to dispose of a few minutes to tell you how happy I was to meet the general, your father (to meet) you and also the young American from Boston so simply and so nicely speaking French with so much spontaneity and grace I shall make a wish that you will be.... without me being partial Would you express to your countrymen all the interest which I bear (have) for our old friend America which your father inspired me... please accept with the expression of my respects all my wishes for your happiness

A. Thiers
President of the French Republic

Special Notes:



WANTED...

Are you downsizing? Are you clearing out an elderly relative's home? Are you closing a business? We are looking to expand our collection and would appreciate donations of:

- programs from school activities and community events
- yearbooks (St. Mary, LaSalle, St. Charles, Waltham School for Girls, Chapel Hill, Gann Academy, Brandeis, Bentley, and Waltham High School)
- genealogies and memoirs
- photos of Waltham people, places, and events
- books and articles written by or about Walthamites
- business records and annual reports
- postcards
- city directories
- maps and plans
- club, organization, and society records
- school records
- census records

and anything else you may find!

These are some examples of what we collect and use in researching Waltham History.

Please let Wayne or Sheila know, so they can arrange pick-up or delivery.

The Cemetery Tour is Back!

Join us as we tour Grove Hill Cemetery with Mr. Jack Cox. Jack will lead us on a walking tour of the oldest parts of the cemetery. Listen as you hear stories of some of Waltham's most prominent forefathers, those folks who made Waltham a special and important place.

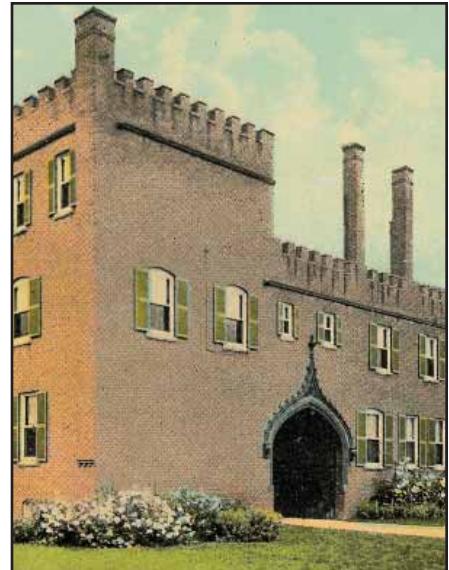
The tour will begin at 10:00 am on Saturday, October 23rd. We will all meet at the front gate on Main Street and walk up to the oldest section of the cemetery.



If you plan to attend, please wear comfortable shoes as the ground is very uneven in the areas we will be viewing.

A special notice will be sent with more information as we get closer to the date.

Call 617-448-6706 for information.



760 Main Street

The Waltham Historical Society opened a new exhibit at 760 Main Street in celebration of Historic Waltham Days. The exhibit highlights famous Waltham photographer Henry Warren, noted for taking the last photograph of Abraham Lincoln before he was assassinated.

This summer was extremely busy at Main Street as Board Members David L. Smith, former Society President Joan Sheridan, and Treasurer Mary Selig kept the doors open to many interested visitors nearly three times per week! The Society would like to extend our sincere thanks for your efforts!

And beginning this month, they're planning a "Meet the Board Tea" on one or two Saturday mornings each month. Come on down and meet the members of the Board of Directors and join them as they enjoy some tea and muffins. Watch the calendar on the web, or keep an eye on your emails for dates and times. It should be great fun!

Join the Society on Facebook!

The Waltham Historical Society can now be found on Facebook! Join today by searching in groups for the Waltham Historical Society!



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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