



The LAMPLIGHTER

Summer 2011

The Duxbury Rural & Historical Society was founded in 1883 with the mission to improve and ornament the streets of Town. The first project undertaken was the purchase of 27 street lamps set out along Washington Street.



The Newsletter of
The Duxbury Rural & Historical Society



Letter from the Director

Patrick Browne

Taking a look back over the past few months, I am pleased to report that our busiest phase of the year (late spring and summer) went quite well and saw the culmination of a number of major projects.

School programs are a big priority during May and June. Our Assistant Director, Alison Arnold does a fantastic job coordinating with the Duxbury Public Schools and lining up volunteers to conduct tours. Our program for the Second Grade focuses on Pilgrim history and tours for the Fifth Grader focuses on the shipbuilding era. This year, we were very pleased to work more closely with the Alden House on the second grade program and their manager Matt Vigneau who conducted the in-class presentation for the second grade. Getting local history into the classrooms and reaching out to students of different ages is one of the most important aspects of our mission. We are very grateful to the DRHS volunteers who make these programs possible.

This spring the Tenth Grade program was rebooted after a bit of a hiatus. I spoke to each of the sophomore U.S. History classes about the experiences of a typical soldier during the Civil War and the role that Duxbury soldiers

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The Wicked Wicket Croquet Tournament: Take That Irene!

Alison Arnold

On Saturday, August 27, approximately 200 people converged on the King Caesar House to play in the first annual "Wicked Wicket" croquet tournament. Despite the approach of Hurricane Irene, players arrived dressed in their creative whites and Wellies, carrying their umbrellas, and braved the rain.

Bob Kroeger served as our croquet master. Kroeger was a member of the U.S. National Croquet Team 1988-1993, he is a member of the Croquet Hall of Fame and is presently Director of the U.S. Croquet Association Instructional Schools. At the start of the event, he gave a short clinic on croquet rules and techniques before the matches commenced. Over 40 teams played in a round robin for 2 rounds, resulting in a four-way tie. The winning team was therefore decided by a "sudden death" shoot-out with each team putting forth their best player. The player to place a shot closest to the post won the tournament on behalf of their team. The winning team consisted of Wendy, Mark and Cory Rayfield and Will Fleming. Their names will be permanently engraved on the plaque that will hang in the King Caesar House and they were each given individual trophies adorned with antique croquet balls hand made by Peter Clapp. A separate shoot-out competition was then held to determine the best overall player. This title was claimed by Dawn Backlund. The award for most creative attire went to Sidney



and Jim McClure who dressed in toga's as an homage to "King Caesar."

Event Chair and DRHS Board Member, Ashley Mohrman, brought the event together along with Co-Chair, Alex Marconi. The Catered Affair was responsible for the wonderful food served during the event. They also generously donated the bar. Sam Davenport, DRHS Vice-President, secured a donation from Harpoon Brewery. Katharine White, Marsan Patton and Beth Tucker under the direction of Ashley Mohrman did a fantastic job with the decorations setting the right atmosphere with balloons, flowers and antique croquet sets. The tent was spectacular! Becky Clapp, DRHS Board Member, organized the prizes and her husband, Peter Clapp used his incredible woodworking skills in creating all the prizes. Thanks also go to DRHS Board Member, Nancy Bennett and her husband, Billy for the generous donation of delicious shrimp.

In all, it was a fun and successful event. We look forward to another next year, so mark your calendars for the Second Annual Wicked Wicket Croquet Tournament on August 18, 2012!

Duxbury's Historical Figures on Facebook

As a continuing part of our commemorating the 150th anniversary of Civil War, we are highlighting online the writings and experiences of two Duxbury figures who participated in the Civil War. Go on Facebook and you will be able to find a personal page for Charlotte Bradford as well as the journal entries of Naval Lieutenant Edward Baker.

As many of our members and readers know, Charlotte was a Civil War nurse from Duxbury. We are fortunate enough to have her diaries from her tenure in Washington, DC at the Drew Archives. Beginning next spring, Carolyn Ravenscroft will begin transcribing Charlottes daily entries (Charlotte's service as an army nurse began in the spring of 1862). In the meantime, Carolyn has created a personal page for Charlotte Bradford. Please "friend" her on Facebook.



Charlotte Bradford

She occasionally comments on events both current and historical.

We are also fortunate to have a voluminous collection of journals by Edward Baker, a Duxbury resident and master mariner who served as a Naval Lieutenant for the Union during the Civil War. Alison Arnold has been combing through his almost daily entries from 1861-1865 and is currently posting them on the corresponding day, 150 years after they were written. Baker writes about challenges in dealing with men from different backgrounds and political views, daily mundane activities, speculation on military movements, frustration or satisfaction with events unfolding and both good and bad news from home. These fascinating entries give the reader a look into the past of one man's journey through the war.

So go online and search for Captain Edward Baker and Charlotte Bradford. "Like" them and learn more about Duxbury in the Civil War.



Captain Edward Baker

Never Too Early to Start Thinking About Christmas!

Though it is the middle of August and we've just passed through a major heat wave, it is never too early to start planning for Christmas at the King Caesar House.

Anyone interested in assisting with decorating should contact Alison at the office (781-934-6106). Decorating begins on Monday, December 5 from 10-4 pm and continues each day from 10-4 pm until Thursday, December 8. Room assignments will be given on a first come first serve basis so if you have a specific room in mind, jump on board now.

We are also in need of volunteers to help support the free Members Preview Party by making or buying two dozen appetizers to be dropped off at the King Caesar House the afternoon of the party or by being a room hostess.

Mark your calendars for this annual event. On Friday, December 9, from 6 to 8 p.m., the Society will host the Members' Preview Party, a free event for members and their guests. The general public may tour the house on Saturday, December 10 and on Sunday, December 11, from Noon until 4 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for non-members, \$5 for students/seniors and children under 6 are admitted free.

The King Caesar House was built in 1809 for Ezra Weston II and his wife, Jerusha Bradford Weston. Weston was known as "King Caesar" for his worldwide preeminence in shipbuilding and shipping during the early 19th century. The house is a fine example of Federal period architecture.

If you are interested in helping in any capacity or have questions or need further information, please call Alison at 781-934-6106 or email her at: aarnold@duxburyhistory.org

“From the Godey Room:” *Historic Clothing Committee Hosts Members of the Costume Society of America*

Madelon Ali

A very special opportunity was presented to the DRHS Historic Clothing Committee. On June 12, 2011, we were selected to host a post-symposium tour after the Costume Society of America’s Annual Symposium, held in Boston this year. The Costume Society of America is a group devoted to education, research, preservation and design of clothing. CSA “advances the global understanding of all aspects of dress and appearance” and works “to stimulate scholarship and encourage study in the rich and diverse field of costume.” Attendees at the post-symposium tour included professors, clothing scholars and interested members of this national and international group. They were appreciative of the uniqueness of our items, and asked pertinent questions; they provided answers to

certain questions that we had about several of our items.

Participants gathered at the Nathaniel Winsor House for this day-long event. The day started with a brief introduction and the attendees were guided around the historic clothing storage areas. Some interesting items from the collection were placed out for display including a collection of homespun items. The group was treated to an elegant lunch graciously hosted by Jane Hinkley and a tour of the town led by Director Patrick Browne. Later the group toured the King Caesar House and viewed an exhibit of historic clothing set up in various rooms.

For us at DRHS our connection to the CSA has allowed us to learn a great deal about managing and exhibiting our historic clothing



collection. The sharing of knowledge and our attendance at national and regional symposia and meeting the experts in the field has increased our knowledge and interest. This in turn is how we are able to help educate our community by our exhibits, and be good stewards of clothing treasures that Duxbury people have donated and entrusted to us over the years. Our clothing collection consists of approximately 1500 to 2000 pieces, counting all the small infant shirts, collars and cuffs (so-called small whites). Each piece offers research possibilities and this adds to the richness of our collection which we are continually committed to preserving.

Working as an Intern at the Drew Archives Dylan Kornberg

Editor’s note: The following article, describing the work of our high school archival interns this past spring, is taken from our archivist’s blog at drewarchives.org. We are pleased to say that the high school internship at the archives has become a highly competitive program with a large number of applicants each term. We are also very pleased that our interns are finding the work rewarding.

I am one of the two new interns for the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, along with my classmate Chris Sullivan. For the last month or so, Chris and I have been working at the Wright Building with Ms. Ravenscroft organizing and categorizing finding aids for our respective collections recently donated to the Historical Society; Chris has been working on the Boylston Collection, while I have been focusing on the French-Atlantic Cable and Robert James Needham Collections, which came as a single set.

Three to four times a week we come to the Wright building from the high school across the street and for around an hour work on our finding aids. The process of creating a finding aid consists of first inventorying a collection’s contents, then organizing the items (first on paper, then physically into folders) into different “series” or categories, i.e. Photographs, Newspaper Clippings, etc. Once organized, Chris or I will write up a brief paragraph detailing the contents of the collection, and another one giving some historical background for the people and events the collection deals with.

For example, the French-Atlantic Cable collection I recently finished the finding aid for consists of photographs and documents from the time the first telegraph cable linking France to the United States was built in 1869, a cable that started in Brest and ended right here in Duxbury. Once the finding aid is complete, it is transferred to a Word Document

on a specific archival format, and added to the lists of finding aids already organized by Ms. Ravenscroft and other archivists.

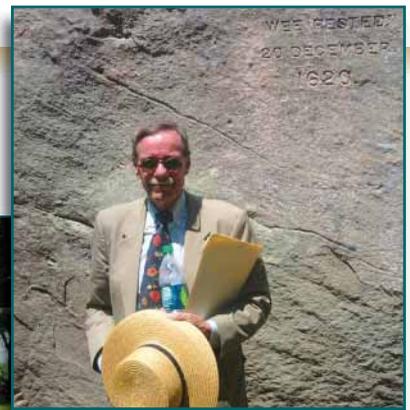
Though it may sound a bit dry at first, the internship provides not only a fantastic opportunity to learn about the process of handling and organizing primary sources, but the handling of those primary sources is utterly fascinating, and I cannot describe an experience quite like holding a piece of history in your hands. The first time I really experienced this was when I came across a telegram sent by King George V of England in 1924 around the world (in 80 seconds, a big deal back then!).

For any high school student who plans on focusing on the study of history later in life, or who finds their curiosity for history not satisfied at the end of history class, sign up for this fantastic internship.

Clark's Island Picnic 2011

Photographs by Patrick Browne

On Sunday, July 31, 2011, the DRHS held our annual Clark's Island Picnic at Cedarfield, the second oldest house on the island, which is owned by the Society. We had our largest turnout in many years with over 200 people present. They came from communities across the South Shore and beyond. Rev. Gary Marks, pastor emeritus of the Church of the Pilgrimage in Plymouth gave the traditional sermon at Pulpit Rock.



Rev. Gary Marks at Pulpit Rock on Clark's Island.



The Wicked Wicket Croquet Tournament, 2011



The winning team, Cory Rayfield, Will Fleming, Wendy Rayfield and Mark Rayfield, claimed the Weston Cup title.



Dawn Backlund, winner of the shoot-out competition.



Letter from the Director

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played. You might think that high school students would be reluctant to try on a scratchy wool uniform or learn how a Civil War company was formed, but they are always enthusiastic. It is a fun and valuable part of our annual programming and we thank the high school teachers for supporting it.

The Tenth Grade program is a great opportunity to discuss our extensive collection of Civil War letters and journals and to make high school students aware of the Drew Archives and the volunteer opportunities available there. We have a small but growing number of high school students who volunteer at the archives. We also have an internship program

through the guidance department which brings two or three high school students per term to work at the archives for academic credit (see the article in this issue by an intern from this past spring). Carolyn Ravenscroft is outstanding with these students and adept at finding engaging work for them to do. We will continue to explore new ways of getting high school students involved at the Drew Archives.

Our new exhibit opened at the King Caesar House. "Duxbury in the Civil War: The Home-front and the Battlefield," commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and illuminating Duxbury's role in the conflict. The opening reception was attended by more than 100 people and feedback has been quite enthusiastic. We have an exciting collection of Civil War objects which are, of course, a prominent part of the exhibit. But the importance of our archival material once again became clear as we tried to piece together the experiences of Duxburyites who served as soldiers, sailors, nurses, or

home-front leaders. Carolyn uncovered some remarkable primary source information, so much that it was difficult to select the historical figures on whom we wished to focus. The resulting exhibit, combining artifacts with excerpts from letters and journals provided a more personal understanding of who these individuals were and why they sacrificed so much in their service.

Finally, I think everyone who attended our "Wicked Wicket Party" on August 27 will long remember the event. The leading rain showers from Hurricane Irene did not dampen anyone's spirits as approximately 180 people turned out to participate in our first annual croquet tournament. We are so grateful to all the brave, fun and dedicated individuals who supported this fundraiser and made it a tremendous success. There are so many people to thank in this regard but most particularly we are grateful to event chairperson Ashley Mohrman and croquet master Bob Kroeger for doing such stellar work in making the event possible.

Civil War Exhibit at King Caesar House



Our new exhibit at the King Caesar House, "Duxbury in the Civil War," opened with a preview reception for members attended by over 100 people.

David Crossley Meechan (1838-1909)

Carolyn Ravenscroft, DRHS Archivist

Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted from our blog: duxburyinthecivilwar.wordpress.com and is one of many articles about Duxbury historical figures and artifacts related to the Civil War.

On May 23, 1861 a town meeting was held in Duxbury to discuss the formation of a company of one hundred men to answer the call of the President. After many rousing speeches the citizens voted to offer a bounty of \$100 to each man who enlisted. Despite the patriot fervor and the inducement of cash, there was one man who felt obliged to abstain from joining the fight. Twenty-three year old, Irish immigrant David Crossley Meechan was reluctant to leave his wife, Laura (Alden), who was expecting their second child, and his young daughter, Mary. He thought it best to let the single, unencumbered men be the first to enter the fray. However, once Gershom Bradford Weston, the town's leading citizen, learned that there were 15 to 16 men from the Ashdod, Tinkertown and Tarkiln areas of Duxbury who would only enlist if the red-headed Irishman did as well, he made Meechan a proposal. Weston offered to look after David's wife and children for the duration of the war if he would persuade his fellow West Duxbury friends to enlist. Meechan obliged and because of it he was given the rank of corporal with the promise of a promotion to sergeant.

The newly formed company was comprised of 90 men, more than half of them Duxbury boys. They spent much of June drilling under William H. Winsor of Plymouth. By July they were ordered to Readville, a section of Hyde Park, just outside Boston, to join the rest of the 18th Massachusetts. The Duxbury boys would become part of Company E under Capt. Thomas Weston of Middleboro. William H. Winsor became 1st Lieutenant but unfortunately, Meechan's promised promotion to sergeant was not fulfilled. This slight, coupled with a corporal's minimal pay and added duties, would later induce Meechan to tear the chevrons from his coat and insist on becoming a private. An act he sorely regretted.

Meechan, along with his Duxbury comrades left Massachusetts for Washington on August 26, 1861. They marched through the streets of New York with much fan fare as the band played "John Brown's Body." As Meechan and his friends made their way through Baltimore they itched to fight with the Rebel leaning crowds who taunted them. It wasn't until they

reached the Capitol that the reality of their plight began to set in. According to Meechan's diary, the men encountered early enlistees whose three months had expired who "told us woeful tales of their hardships."

These "hardships" are enumerated in Meechan's diary transcribed by his descendent Evelyn Alden Ryerson Hathaway. Food was scarce, nights were unbearably cold or intolerably hot, depending on the season, and sickness was always prevalent. There were seemingly endless days spent on picket lines, drilling or on "fatigue duty". These were small distractions compared with the horrors and confusion of battle. During the course of his four years in the Union Army Meechan saw more than his share of action including Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg. He was wounded twice, shot in both the face and knee.

His diary also gives us a glimpse into the camaraderie and lighter side of a soldier's life. Ham Wadsworth of Surplus Street, Duxbury, for example was always quick with a joke, once calling a horrible soup "fried water." In March of 1861 Meechan and his fellow Duxburyites found oysters in the salt water near Hampton, VA. After a day tramping bare-legged in the mud they had more oysters than they could carry. That night they supplemented their rations with "oysters raw, boiled, roasted, fried and stewed."

And, on a spring day in 1863 the soldiers of the 18th played a game of baseball against the 22nd Massachusetts and won too much rejoicing. You can almost imagine the crack of a make-shift bat as the boys spent an afternoon pretending the war was far away.

Meechan was captured along with his Duxbury friend, John "Jack" Southworth (see prior blog post), during the Battle of the Wilderness on May 9, 1864 and imprisoned in Andersonville, GA which he called "the most horrible bull pen that ever human beings were shut up in." He was by Jack's side as he died of dysentery on June 25, 1864, commenting "never felt so affected in my life, he seemed like a brother to me."

After suffering in various prison camps for ten months, David Meechan was exchanged for Rebel prisoners on March 5, 1865 at Wilmington, NC and honorably discharged on March 16th. He had been away for almost four, long years. The baby (Abigail, b. 1861) his wife had been expecting when he left for the front lived only three years, having died before her father laid eyes on her. After the war David and his wife had two more children, Isabelle (b. 1866) and Samuel (b. 1868). When Laura died these young children were adopted by the Sheldon family on Washington Street and Mary, the eldest, was apprenticed to the family of Meechan's old Lieutenant, William Winsor. David Meechan was married a second time in 1872 to Adeline Lewis Briggs and moved to East Haven, CT. David and Adeline had three children: Jessie Lewis (b. 1875), Walter (b. 1877) and George (b. 1879). David Crossley Meechan died at age 71 in 1909 and is buried in the Mayflower Cemetery, Duxbury.

Much of the above information is from *Big Davey the Brave* by David Crossley Meechan and Evelyn Alden Ryerson Hathaway.



Private David Meechan (at right) with an unidentified comrade, probably another Duxbury soldier from the 18th Massachusetts, Company E.



Notes from the Drew Archives

Carolyn Ravenscroft,
Archivist

After a flurry of activity in the late spring and early summer, the Archives has settled into a more methodical summer rhythm. Volunteers have been transcribing letters and helping preserve old town records while researchers have been dropping by to look at Duxbury maps and do genealogical research. Summer is a generally a time to regroup before the onslaught of the academic year and it has been nice to take a bit of a breather.

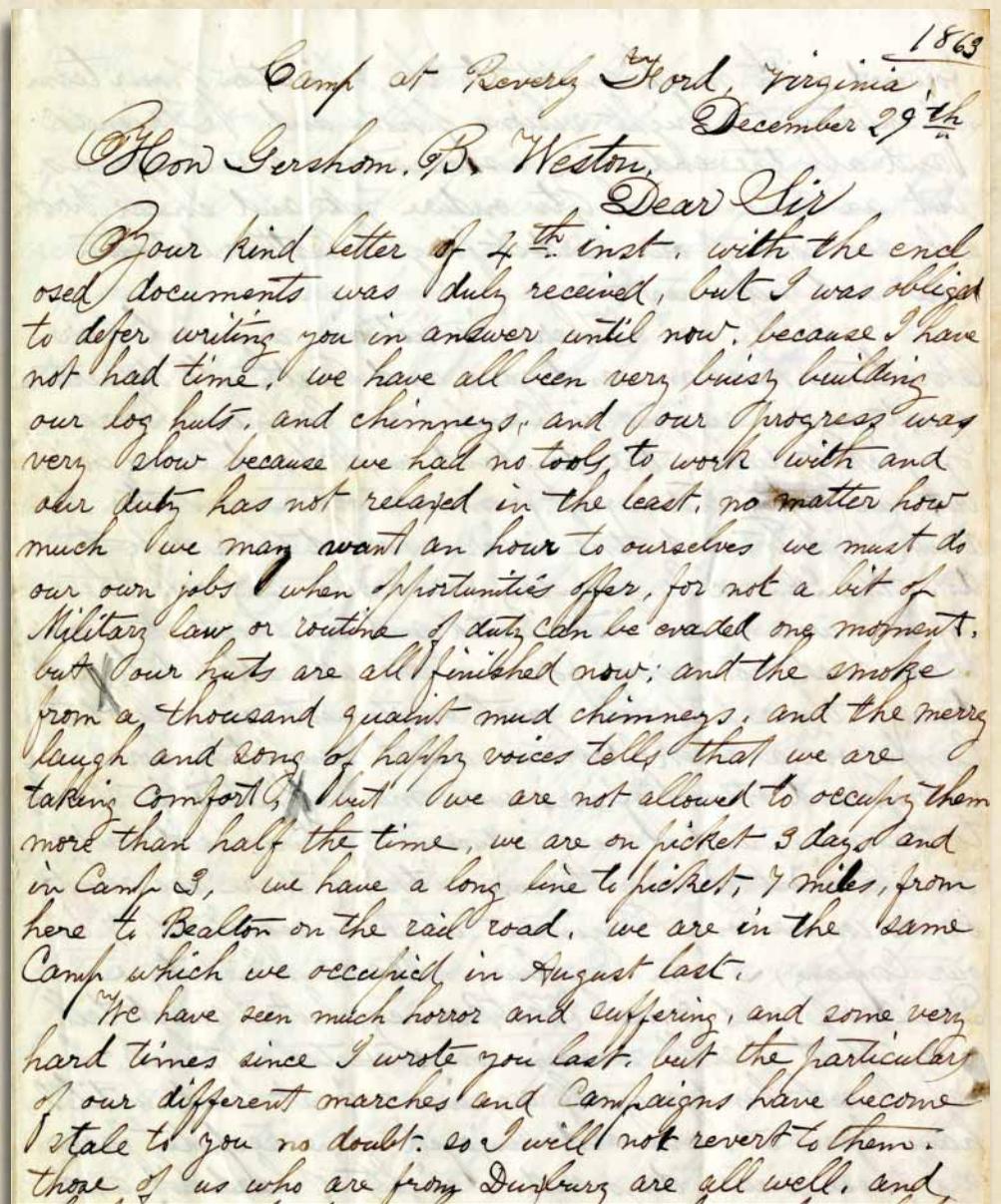
That is not to say there has been nothing happening that is noteworthy. In fact, I received some very momentous news recently. As you may recall from a previous Newsletter, the Finding Aids for the collections at the Drew Archives can now be found at the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/). This online resource is maintained by the Library of Congress and is accessed by students and scholars throughout the world looking to do archival research. NUCMC, as it is called, has just launched a four year program spotlighting Civil War collections throughout the U.S. I was contacted by my liaison at NUCMC and told that our very own collection of John Southworth letters will be highlighted next year. This is truly thrilling news – for a local historical society to be included along side major universities, museums and state archives shows we must be doing something right!

Speaking of the Civil War, there are many examples of letters written by and to soldiers currently on display at the King Caesar House at the moment as part of the Duxbury in the Civil War exhibit. If you have not stopped by to see the Exhibit, I urge you to do so before the summer is over. If you simply can't get there, rest assured, you can view the letters any time once they are back at the Wright Building.

And now for a final point from me regarding the Collections at the Drew Archival Library. I can't tell you how many times people ask, when I show them something exciting like a Civil War letter, "Can anyone look at this?" The answer is YES! Anyone who has a desire to learn more about history and the people who lived it can come to the Archives and read or see almost anything we have. You don't have to be a scholar or have a specific research project in mind. If you've ever wanted to read an old diary, see an early 19th century log book, peruse an old atlas, or simply spend the

afternoon quietly reading one of our many genealogical resources, come on by. It is always best to email me so I can help get whatever you need ready, but that is not to say you can't just pop in. Ask anyone who has wondered in looking for the Duxbury Student Union and they will tell you I give one heck of an impromptu tour. So the next time you and your family are wondering what to do on a rainy day, come to the Archives and experience history!

Enjoy the remainder of the summer, and I look forward to seeing you soon.



A letter from Pvt. David Meechan, a member of the "Duxbury Company," aka Company E of the 18th Massachusetts, to the company's benefactor, Gershom B. Weston of Duxbury. Meechan writes, "We have seen much horror and suffering and some very hard times since I wrote you last..."

New Members

The Duxbury Rural & Historical Society is pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined the Society since the last newsletter. We thank you for your support and your dedication to preserving Duxbury's heritage!

<i>Candice Buckley</i>	<i>Elizabeth Gillis</i>
<i>Julie Buckley</i>	<i>Judith Canty Graves</i>
<i>Joanne Cushing</i>	<i>Lee Maxey</i>
<i>Jim and Judy Dinneen</i>	<i>Gary Powell</i>
<i>Suzanne Essley</i>	<i>Kim Simonsen</i>
<i>Nancy Kolstad and Sarah Evans</i>	<i>Andy & Kim Wiemeyer</i>
<i>Cynthia Garrett</i>	<i>Charles Wood, Jr.</i>
	<i>Dan & Emily Zibinskas</i>

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Library

Drew Archival Library

147 St. George Street, Duxbury

Monday - Friday, 9 am - 1 pm and by appointment

Museums

King Caesar House

120 King Caesar Road, Duxbury

Open July - Labor Day,

Wednesday - Sunday, 1 pm - 4 pm.

Captain Gershom Bradford House

931 Tremont Street, Duxbury

Open July - Labor Day, Sunday, 1 pm - 4 pm.

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