

WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Volume XLXIII No. 1 — Spring 2022

SPRING LECTURE HIGHLIGHTS WORK OF HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

In the mid-20th century, sisters Ellen and Alice Jones bequeathed their residence, the former Josiah Smith Tavern, to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA). To celebrate the re-opening of the restored tavern, the Weston Historical Society spring lecture will be devoted to the history of SPNEA (now Historic New England) beginning with William Sumner Appleton, founder and chief force behind the early 20th century movement to preserve historic homes in New England.

Speaker Ken Turino is Manager of Community Partnerships and Resource Development for Historic New England. His presentation will use Appleton's story to show how the preservation movement in America was born and how the techniques he developed were adopted by what became the profession. He will also talk about how the field has evolved and broadened over time.

Continued on page 6 and 8

Weston Public Library has opened up the Community Room for events. WHS is planning to hold this lecture in person for the first time in two years. If circumstances change and we go to Zoom, an announcement will be sent via email and will be on our website, westonhistory.org.



William Sumner Appleton in front of the Harrison Gray Otis House in 1929. Appleton founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in 1910 in response to the loss of the region's historic fabric. He led the rapidly growing organization for 37 years until his death in 1947. Today SPNEA, now Historic New England, owns 37 historic houses and 1284 acres of farmland and landscapes in five states, representing nearly 400 years of architecture. They welcome 200,000 visitors each year. Photo Courtesy of Historic New England.

“William Sumner Appleton and the Preservation Movement”

a lecture by Ken Turino

Thursday, April 28

7:30 pm

**In person at Weston Public Library Community Room
Refreshments. All are Welcome**

Weston Media Center will be videotaping the lecture, which will be available on our website, westonhistory.org.



CELEBRATE WESTON!

Saturday, May 21, 2022
10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.



Music & Entertainment
Local Food
Festivities
Historical Exhibits
Games & Activities
Fun for All Ages

SAVE THE DATE, COME CELEBRATE!

After seven years of study and planning meetings, and three years of construction, the Town of Weston has completed an \$18 million-dollar face-lift to improve the look, function, and safety of the center of Town. New places to sit and gather, enhanced by new lighting, traffic-calming measures, cross walks, and parking create an appealing and accessible business and cultural center. The wires and poles are gone, for a clean new look that lets the historic beauty of the refurbished Old Library (now the Weston Art & Innovation Center, AIC) and Josiah Smith Tavern shine as striking focal points and new centers of art and culture.

To mark this milestone in the town's history, a major celebration is planned for Saturday, May 21, 2022 (rain date May 22) in our brand-new Town Center. This is our opportunity to see and celebrate the beautiful new spaces and to thank the committee members, municipal staff, organizations, businesses, and institutions that made this revival possible.

Activities for all ages will take place between 10 am and 4 pm, including music and entertainment, antique cars, tours, exhibits, a Rail Trail Fun Walk, children's activities, food offerings, re-enactors, and a street fair. The annual Weston High School Spring Fling will take place on the Town Green. A highlight of the day will be the Commemoration on the Town Green at 1 pm, followed by a concert featuring the Weston High School band, orchestra, and choral groups.

Coordinating the festivities is the Town Center Celebration Committee, a group of local residents under the leadership of Dusty Rhodes, Weston resident and president of the event planning company Conventures, Inc. See page 3 for Weston Historical Society's planned activities. For more information, go to www.westonma.gov/Celebrate.

COMMORATION: 1 pm
Town Green

COMMEMORATION CONCERT:
1:30 - 3:30

Weston High School Marching
Band, Orchestra, Choral Groups

**CELEBRATION MARKET-
PLACE: 10 am - 4 pm**
Josiah Smith Tavern Parking Lot
Main Stage Entertainment
Clubs & Organization Marketplace

**CELEBRATE WESTON
BUSINESS STREET FAIR:**
10 am - 4 pm
Visit Weston Businesses

**KNOX PARK CHRONICLE
CORNER: 12 - 4 pm**
Historic Storytelling

CELEBRATION PROGRAM:
10 am - 4 pm
Weston Historical Society Exhibit
at JST
Josiah Smith Tavern Tours
Photo Exhibit "Town Center
through the Years" (AIC)
Weston AIC Tours
Fix-It First Bike Clinic (AIC)
"Then and Now" Journey
First Parish Church- Clock Tower
Climb, Programs, and Tours
St. Julia Church Programs & Tours
Town Square Food Pavilion
Celebration Street Fair
Antique and Classic Cars
Kid's Fair
Cemetery Tours
Fire Engines and Police Cars
Golden Ball Tavern Museum Tours
Country Garden Club Plant Sale
Rail Trail Fun Walk
Patrick Ahearn Architectural TED
Talk
Weston High School Spring Fling

WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PLAYS IMPORTANT ROLE

The Weston Historical Society is involved in three Celebrate Weston! events.

"History Under One Roof" **WHS Exhibit at JST**

It's opening day for the society's major exhibit. Visit the restored Josiah Smith Tavern, learn about its history, and view the society's rich collection of Jones family objects. See page 8 for a picture of the hard-working exhibit team.

"Town Center Through the Years" **Photo Exhibit at the AIC**

Don't miss this exhibit in the Reading Room of the Art & Innovation Center (AIC), co-sponsored by the society, AIC, and Weston Media Center. It highlights major changes to the Town Center from the early 20th century creation of the Town Green to the recent transformation (including photos of those ugly utility poles and wires, lest we forget!). Weston resident and talented photographer Nicole Mordecai has been taking present-day photos to display alongside the same historic views. In a tribute to another dedicated photographer, the exhibit will include *Town Crier* photo montages by the late Barbara Elmes. Weston Media will have a video playing. It's not too late to contribute your photos of the center from years ago or yesterday (see westonhistory.org for details). The exhibit committee includes Jean Arturi, Nicole Mordecai, Audrey Pepper, Lisa Green, Mark Curelop, and Pam Fox. Photographs will become part of the Weston Historical Society collection.

"Then and Now" Journey

Did you ever stand at the edge of Town Green or in front of a Weston business and wonder what used to be there in the "olden days." As part of Celebrate Weston!, fifteen sandwich boards will be strategically placed along Boston Post Road, with historic photos from the collection of the Weston Historical Society.



TOWN OF WESTON ADOPTS NEW LOGO

The Town of Weston has a new logo (bottom right). The original Town Seal, (above), which will still be used for official business, was designed by estate owner, inventor, and Weston selectman Francis Blake, who wanted to familiarize residents with the three most important dates in Weston's history: 1630, when Watertown (which included Weston) was established; 1698, when settlers established their own Farmers' Precinct; and 1712-13, the year of the town's incorporation.

After making up the die, Blake discovered that January 1, 1712, was calculated using the "old style" Julian calendar and was the equivalent of January 12, 1713, in the Gregorian calendar. The reason is that before 1752, the year began in March, so January and February were the last two months of the previous

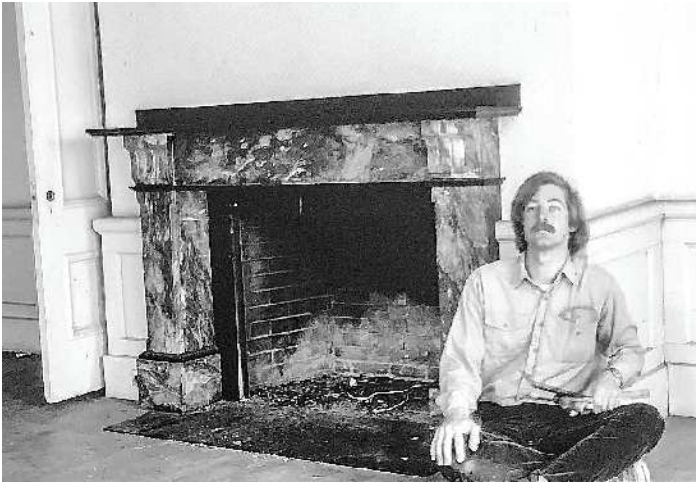
Left: In designing the Town Seal in the early 1890s, selectman Francis Blake incorporated the three most important dates in early Weston history. The first of the three versions at left was an early draft. His dilemma was whether to write the incorporation date according to the "Old Style" (1712) or the contemporary calendar (1713). His compromise was 1712-13 (the third seal).

year. When making the change, 11 days were added, meaning that January 1, 1712 computes to January 12, 1713. (This gets very complicated. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conversion_between_Julian_and_Gregorian_calendars)

The new logo was developed by designers at Conventures, Inc., the event planning firm organizing the May 21 Celebrate Weston! day. It will appear on "Welcome to Weston" banners that will hang from the new lamp posts beginning a few weeks before the celebration.

In envisioning the new logo, the designers looked to the logo they developed for the town's 300th anniversary in 2013. While some towns have images incorporated into their seals, such as Concord's Minuteman, Weston's original seal did not have a visual image. The design for the 300th was inspired by the 1917 Town Hall, with its distinctive columns and cupola. When the new logo is printed in two colors, the circle will be burgundy and the Town Hall will appear in gray. Unlike Blake's more complicated incorporation date, this one says simply "INC 1713."





RESCUED FROM THE BIG HOUSE

Tom Paine, great-grandson of General Charles Jackson Paine, has donated two sconces from the general's aptly named "Big House", which stood on Highland Street until it was demolished in 1972. The fixtures were removed that year along with the glass shades and nine electric light bulbs with carbonized bamboo and tungsten filaments, dating from the 1890s. According to Tom, at least four of them still work.

The Big House originally had gas fixtures. These may have been electrified not long after the founding in 1896 of the Weston Electric Light Company, which was funded by selling shares of stock to civic-minded residents like Paine. Electric wires were concealed under exposed wooden strips that looked like moldings.

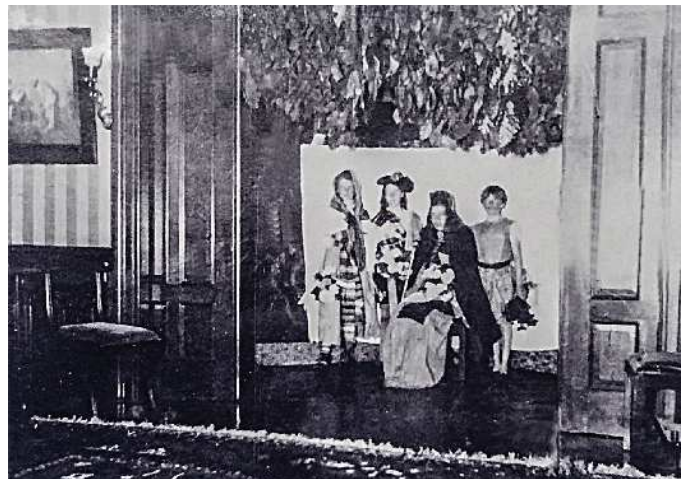
The Big House was home to Charles J. and Julia B. Paine and their seven children and, after Paine's death in 1916, to his son John Bryant Paine, his wife Louise, and their seven children. As the third generation left home and Tom's grandmother moved into a more manageable house on Chestnut Street in 1966, the house lay vacant and emptied of furnishings. The size, high taxes, and expensive operating costs (the house had 11 fireplaces—none with a damper—and an inefficient coal furnace heating system) all discouraged any potential buyers. After seven years, in 1972, the trustees decided that the time had come to demolish the family mansion before it became vandalized or set on fire.

Days before the arrival of the wrecking ball, Tom Paine made one last trip into the now empty house and rescued the light fixtures as well as a built-in bookcase from the back parlor, a small paneled door from under the stairway, two large wood finials from a balcony, and the then century-old Italian marble fireplace from the dining room, where he had enjoyed many a Sunday noontime meal.

His cousin Carol Burnes did one better, saving the barn intact and installing other salvaged items.

For many years Tom had a recurring dream of living in some corner of the Big House that had miraculously escaped destruction, which it surely would have if the era of McMansions and condos had only arrived fifteen years earlier.

Many thanks to Tom Paine for donating the sconces, glass shades, and one of the tungsten filament light bulbs, and for his contributions to this story.



Above left: Tom Paine in front of the dining room fireplace at the Big House, 1972. (Courtesy of Tom Paine). Top: Double sconce from the Big House (Photo by David Fox). Center: The Big House in winter (Photo by John Ganson). Bottom: The single sconce can be seen in the upper left corner of this c. 1898 photo of "Nina's Play." Georgina ("Nina") was one of the daughters of Charles and Julia Paine. (Courtesy of Tom Paine)

GIFT ILLUSTRATES MELONE FAMILY ACHIEVEMENTS AT WESTON HIGH

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THE TOWN CRIER

8 Melones Set Family Record For Weston High Activities



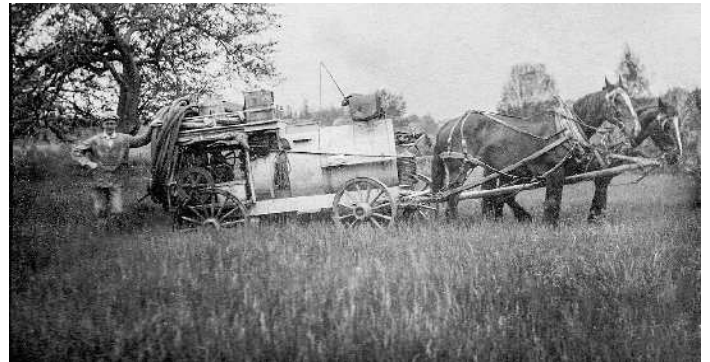
The Melone family. Left to right, front row: Cecelia, Mrs. Melone, Joseph Melone and Anna. Back row, Vincent, John, Daniel, Anthony and William Melone.

The eight children of Anna Maria and Guiseppe (Joseph) Melone earned record honors at Weston High School for excellence in scholarship, athletics, and citizenship. Weston Historical Society is grateful to Cara Lamakina, daughter of the late Anna Melone, for the donation of items including the Theodore Chandler Medal (right) awarded to her mother, who was Class of 1956. Two of Anna's siblings also won the prestigious medal. The gift also includes varsity letters, Anna's letter sweater, and a Weston High School "sit-upon."



Left: The Triple A Market advertised on the back side of this Weston High School "sit-upon," which was padded to provide a more comfortable seat at sporting events.

INSIGHTS INTO THE MCMAHON FAMILY OF CONCORD ROAD



P.M.G. O. Form No. 68.

REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE.

To whom it may concern, Greetings:

THESE PRESENTS ATTEST, That in accordance with the proclamation of the President of the United States, and in compliance with law,

Bernard Owen McMahon
(First name.) (Middle name.) (Last name.)
Concord Rd. Weston Madison Mass.
(No.) (Street or R. F. D. No.) (City or town.) (County.) (State.)

has submitted himself to registration and has by me been duly registered this 12 day of September, 1918 under the supervision of the Local Board designated on the back hereof.

Grant M. Palmer, Registrar.
(Place stamp of Local Board on back of this card.)

Weston Historical Society is grateful to Carolyn Ware for her donation of a collection of photographs and memorabilia belonging to the McMahon family of 474 Concord Rd. The "real photo postcard" above shows an unknown farmer and his horse-drawn apple sprayer. Below is Bernard McMahon's 1918 registration card. After the U.S. entered World War I, males between ages 21 and 30 were required to register for military service.

PLANNING A JUNE WEDDING? TRY THIS WEDDING CAKE RECIPE

Among the items in the Weston Historical Society collection is an 1888 recipe book, "Something to Eat," compiled by the women of First Parish Church to help raise money for the new fieldstone church.

WEDDING CAKE

One and one-fourth pounds butter, one pound brown sugar, eleven eggs, cinnamon, allspice, clove, nutmeg, mace, to taste. Two thirds cup black molasses, one small teaspoonful soda, put into the molasses. One pound flour, one wine glass brandy, one wine glass rum, two and one-fourth pounds raisins, two and one-fourth pounds currants, one and one-fourth pounds citron. Mrs. E. L. Cutting



Left: The Swett-Ilseley House, c. 1670, in Newbury, Massachusetts is one of the oldest surviving houses in New England with one of the largest fireplaces, more than ten feet wide and containing three bee-hive ovens. It was the first house to be acquired by the newly formed preservation society, in 1911. (Wikipedia photo)

WILLIAM SUMNER APPLETON: FIRST FULL-TIME PROFESSIONAL PRESERVATIONIST

Portions of this article are taken from the Historic New England website, www.historicnewengland.org/about-us/mission-leadership/

William Sumner Appleton (1874 - 1947) was a member of a distinguished old New England family and grew up in the bow-front house on Beacon Street built by his grandfather, mill owner Nathaniel Appleton. This background, along with a year abroad with his family as a young teenager and his studies at Harvard, influenced his interest in 17th, 18th, and 19th century New England buildings.

After his father's death in 1903, Appleton was trying to decide whether to continue the family's Holbrook Farm Dairy in Newton, Massachusetts. He took classes at Harvard's Bussey Institution, a school of agriculture and horticulture, but quickly decided that "the farmer's life was not for me" and sold the dairy.

Through the Sons of the Revolution, Appleton became active in the 1905 effort to preserve the Paul Revere House in Boston's North End, the oldest surviving house in the city. In 1906, he took the lead in another preservation effort — to thwart the Boston Transit Commission's plans to alter the Old State House. In 1909 Appleton learned of plans to significantly alter the 18th century Jonathan Harrington House overlooking the green in Lexington, site of a dramatic confrontation with British troops on April 18, 1775. Outrage at yet another loss to the region's historic fabric had a galvanizing effect on him, and he took the necessary legal steps to establish the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

The first house acquired by the fledgling organization, in 1911, was the c. 1670 Swett-Ilseley House in Newbury, Mas-

sachusetts. It was initially let out as a tea house with the goal of making it self-supporting. Appleton's prime criterion for preserving a building was its intrinsic architectural or aesthetic merit, rather than its association with great men or events. He had a special interest in the modest dwellings of the first settlers, which by the standards of the day were incompatible with modern comfort and were falling into decay. Over the years, the organization acquired ten 17th century houses, valued today by scholars as unique records of late medieval building methods in this country.

As a professional preservationist, Appleton brought a scientific method and defined procedures that are largely followed to this day. He came to see a building as an evolving organism, whose changes over time preserved the historic record of many eras. This enabled him to resist the temptation to restore a building to a particular period to make it easier for a layperson to understand.

In 1916 the organization acquired the Harrison Gray Otis House in Boston as its headquarters, a step that fortuitously saved the building from demolition a few years later when Cambridge Street was widened. Appleton also established a New England Museum — at first a random assortment of old things, which gradually took shape as a systematic, documented collection of furnishings and fine and decorative arts, as houses with their contents intact entered the collection.

At the same time, Appleton was a voracious collector of images — postcards, ephemera, measured drawings, and most importantly, photographs. An avid amateur photographer who took hundreds of documentary photographs of his restoration projects, he befriended professional photographers and sought donations of their work. Not everything could be saved, but buildings and streetscapes could be "preserved on paper."

Today Historic New England's holdings are recognized as the richest and best documented assemblage of New England material culture in the nation.



Left: Logo of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. In the 1990s, the organization changed its name to Historic New England and adopted a new logo.

SPNEA AND THE JOSIAH SMITH TAVERN



Above: Ellen Jones (1857 - 1950), with glasses, and her younger sister, Alice (1861 - 1947)

Sisters Alice and Ellen Jones were the last of three generations of Joneses to live in the former Josiah Smith Tavern. In their wills, they left their home, contents, and a small endowment to the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities "... in order that the house on said premises may be preserved for posterity as a place of historical and architectural interest." SPNEA accepted the bequest with the understanding that the Town of Weston would lease the building.

A report of 1951 notes:

The series of structures known as the Jones Tavern were so staunchly put together at their various periods that in spite of poor recent upkeep, the building is still keeping out the weather, and resisting rot and insect attack, to an unusual degree for its age.

To oversee structural repairs and restoration, a three-person tavern committee was appointed, with SPNEA Director Bertram K. Little and town representatives William R. Dewey Jr. and Charles O. Richardson. Restoration work was carried out under the supervision of Roy W. Baker, a restoration contractor who was also supervisor of properties for SPNEA.

The principal architectural changes, carried out in 1952, were the removal of the porch in front of the original five-bay tavern, the addition of a pediment over the

front door, the removal of a window bay on the east façade, and the removal of partitions that divided the second floor hall (now known as the ballroom) into three bedrooms.

Removing the porch was an approach favored by architect and Weston resident Harold Willis, who was part of the restoration effort. It was reportedly favored by residents as well. For SPNEA, the main consideration appears to have been financial, as money for a full scale restoration was lacking. The decision to remove this important architectural element appears to be contrary to the preservation philosophy of SPNEA founder William Sumner Appleton, who had died just a few years earlier (see page 6).

SPNEA allocated \$17,000 toward the restoration and made it clear that this was the maximum available. Charles O. Richardson contributed \$2,000 for rooms to be used by the Weston Historical Committee. The Women's Community League contributed \$2,000. A fund-raising campaign struggled and fell short of its goal to raise an additional \$15,000. Town Meeting later voted the needed funds.

In 1983, SPNEA sold the former tavern to the town for \$48,542 and transferred \$97,084 in endowment funds. The JST became part of a conservation easement program established in the early 1980s. Historic New England holds easements on more than 100 privately owned New England properties. The program provides comprehensive protection of exterior, interior, and landscape features and is considered a national model for the protection of buildings that remain in active use and in private ownership. Many of the properties in the program, like the Josiah Smith Tavern, were previously owned by SPNEA/Historic New England and were returned to private ownership with preservation restrictions that continue in perpetuity.



Left: Photo of the JST in 1952, before removal of part of the porch and the bay window on the east façade. (Photos on this page from Weston Historical Society)



Above, l-r, Rodd Langenhagen, Craig Tanny, Liam Gavin, Holden Langenhagen, Colin Anderson, Tommy Kickham. (Courtesy of Holden Langenhagen.)

MERRIAM BARN REVEALED

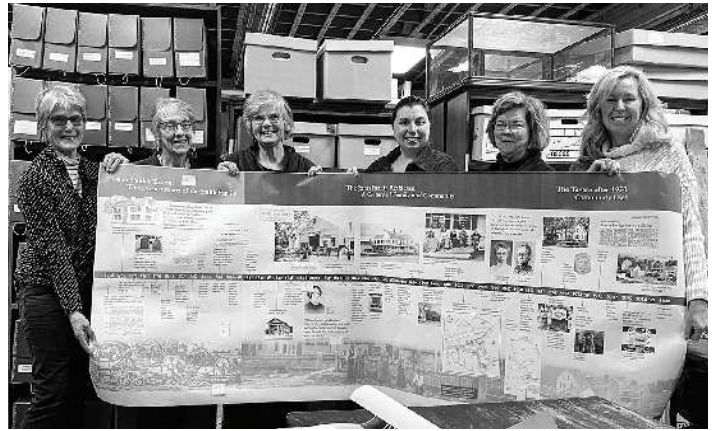
Last fall, as an Eagle Scout project, Weston High School junior Holden Langenhagen took on the challenge of uncovering the ruins of the Merriam barn adjacent to the Merriam Street Brush Dump. The barn was destroyed by fire in 1926, and trees and invasive plants had obscured almost all traces of the once monumental structure. Langenhagen and his scout crew created a 100-foot-long trail around the site, showcasing the cleared foundation walls and ramp. The trail leads to a 10 X 15-foot area surrounded by small stone walls. As part of the project, Langenhagen met with Weston Forest & Trail leaders to request that the trail be made an official part of Weston's trail system. He also met with the Weston Historical Commission to request funding for a sign explaining the site's history.

The sign features the only known photograph of the barn, as well as a history and a QR code to access additional information. The text, written by Langenhagen, reads:

Built in 1876, said at the time to be one of the largest barns in all of Middlesex County. The barn's three spires bring to mind the three tragedies that befell it: the collapse of the rooftop water tank, the cattle herd's contraction of foot and mouth disease, and the fire of October 30, 1926, that left it in ashes.

Lecture by Ken Turino (continued)

Turino is also on the faculty of Tufts University in the Museum Studies Department, where he teaches courses on Exhibition Planning and Reimagining Historic House Museums. Ken is a curator, educator, director, producer, and author. His films have been shown on PBS including the prize-winning film, "Back to School: Lessons from Norwich's (VT) One-Room Schoolhouses."



Above l-r, Kitty Smith; Christine Reynolds, graphic designer; Pam Fox, Rebecca Migdal, curator; Mary Marder, and Molly Varnau. (Photo by Mary Gregory)

JST EXHIBIT TEAM GEARS UP FOR OPENING

Preparation began last winter on the historical society's exhibit "History Under One Roof: The Evolution of the Josiah Smith Tavern." which will be on display at the JST through December. We wanted to make sure that visitors to the newly re-opened building could learn about its history and experience the society's rich collection of Jones family artifacts. We have been researching, writing, designing, cleaning objects, and painting display panels. Thanks to all those whose have worked so hard, and to those whose donations have made this exhibit possible.

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Membership dues: Individual \$35, Family \$50, Sponsor \$75, Supporting \$100+, Life membership \$500. Tax deductible contributions and bequests to the Endowment Fund are welcome.

Please visit our website: www.westonhistory.org.