



The Babcock-Smith House Museum Newsletter

Volume 13 Number 1

Winter 2017

Patricia Hval Retires

Patricia Hval's announcement of her retirement after twenty years as resident manager of the Museum came as a bittersweet moment at the September Trustees meeting as we were celebrating her "significant" birthday. Actually, this is the second time that Patricia has left us because she worked for 7 ½ years earlier in her career to care for the museum building and its collections.

Patricia has been an invaluable member of the BSH Museum team, working closely for many years with Ike Smith when he was "a young and hearty" man filled with "ideas and energy." One of her fondest memories is sitting under an imposing maple tree with Ike and his wife Gertrude and listening to Ike's stories. "He was the best storyteller I ever met."

She also fondly remembers the evenings in the softly-lit museum when members of the Westerly Historical Society and the Museum shared a cup of wassail while listening to the gentle strains of Christmas music played by a harpist. Juxtaposed with those memories of a sedate evening is the memory of Docent Mary Cool, baton raised high, leading a group of girls at an American Girl Doll Tea singing at the tops of their lungs as they marched around the grounds.

During her tenure, the job grew from resident caretaker to resident manager. In addition to keeping the brass candlesticks gleaming and the mouse traps empty, Patricia took over scheduling events and rentals in the Carriage House, reporting monthly at the Board meeting as to the state of the mansion, and sharing both her innovative ideas and her concerns.

She survived the building of the addition to the Carriage House, often being on site to open doors for the contractors. Candlelight Dinners in the mansion could never have been such a successful fund-raiser unless Patricia had willingly let the docents take over her kitchen and parlor for the evening. With her knowledge of antiques and collectibles gleaned from owning her business, Fine Consignments, she helped price innumerable objects for sale at the Christmas Bazaar. Often she gave tours of the mansion to out-of-state Babcock descendants who wandered around until they found her door.



Patricia lived her passion for protecting the environment by installing a composter and creating her superlative raised garden beds outside her door. Her vegetable and flowers, especially her hollyhocks, were the envy of all who saw them and Patricia shared them freely. Her Yorkshire terriers, first Bishop and then Blake, shared their exuberant affection with all of us. Probably one of the things we most appreciated was rescuing us when we inadvertently set off an alarm.

We celebrated Patricia's birthday with fabulous lemon and raspberry cupcakes (pictured with Patricia) made by treasurer Maureen Bjorkland. We wish Patricia and Blake not only many more birthdays, but also fulfillment in their next adventure. We will miss you, Patricia, but we are all the better for having had you with us for so many years—twice.

Rhode Island Sampler Programs For Two Audiences

Children's Program:

Sampling History's Mysteries
Saturday, May 13, 10am-12pm
Carriage House

Program designed for children in K-6, but all are welcome. Pre-registration required; call 401-315-2768.



Adult Program:

This Needlework of Mine:
Historic Samplers in Rhode Island
Sunday, June 4, 2-3:30 pm
Carriage House

Last fall people brought in samplers to be documented as part of the South County Sampler Initiative. This program will share the findings of that documentation and explore the history of schoolgirl samplers.

Come learn how objects such as schoolgirl samplers can be used to understand the lives of young children long ago. Hands-on activities will include making a bookmark with cross-stitched initials and solving the mystery of Clarissa.

These programs are offered as part of the South County Sampler Initiative funded by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities.

Samplers from the Museum will be on display and audience members are again encouraged to bring in their samplers to share.

Thank You to Our 2016 Docents, Members and Sponsors

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1734 Society

A special thanks to those who have remembered the Babcock-Smith House Museum in their estate planning.

John B. Coduri*
 Ellen L. Madison, Ph.D.*
 Henry Nardone
 Janice Berchielli Tunney

Our thanks extend to all our members who have contributed their time, talent and other gifts to the Babcock-Smith House Museum. We have made every attempt to make the membership list accurate as of January 2017. Please inform us of any errors.

Become a Member

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Membership Level: ___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$250 ___\$500 ___\$1,000 ___\$2,500
Individual Family

Make checks payable to **Babcock-Smith House Museum**. Thank you.

I would like information on: ___ candlelight dinners for 12 ___ including the Museum in my estate plan

My donation will be matched by _____

Mail to: Babcock-Smith House Museum, c/o
 Ellen Madison, 149 South Woody Hill Road,
 Westerly, RI 02891

The Mystery Is Solved



Are our faces ever red! Here's the story behind the mystery of the plaster model in the last newsletter.

While planning her Western trip, Linda Chaffee decided to check the location of the only known Westerly granite monument in Wyoming. She discovered that the monument had been cut using the very same plaster model. And, much to our chagrin, the marker is shown on page 193 of our book. In our defense, the plaster model is of the decorative part only and there is lettering above and below.

The marker, dedicated to Packard Motor Company President Henry B. Joy, the first president of the Lincoln Highway Association, is presently located east of Laramie in the Summit Rest Area.

In 1912, railroads dominated interstate transportation. Roads were primarily for local use, but support for a system of improved interstate highways had been growing. On July 1, 1913, the Lincoln Highway Association (LHA) was established "to procure the establishment of a continuous improved highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, open to lawful traffic of all description without toll charges."¹ The first goal of the LHA was to build the highway from Times Square to Lincoln Park in San Francisco, a total of 3,389 miles.

The second goal was to use the Lincoln Highway as a model for highways which would benefit agriculture and commerce and be a credit to the American people. Henry Joy served as its first president and considered the Lincoln Highway his most significant achievement.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1938, calling for a report on the feasibility of a system of transcontinental toll roads which would lead to the creation of the Interstate Highway System.



A nationwide radio broadcast on July 3, 1938, featuring interviews with LHA officials, marked the 25th Anniversary of the Lincoln Highway. Carl Fisher said that

the Lincoln Highway Association has accomplished its primary purpose, that of providing an object lesson to show the possibility in highway transportation and the importance of a unified, safe, and economical system of roads. . . . Now I believe the country is at the beginning of another new era in highway building (that will) create a system of roads far beyond the dreams of the Lincoln Highway founders. I hope this anniversary observance makes millions of people realize how vital roads are to our national welfare, to economic programs, and to our national defense

Mrs. Henry B. Joy ordered this monument as part of the 25th anniversary celebration. Isaac Gallup Smith Sr., Chaffee's grandfather, designed the bas relief pictured. The monolith, with its stippled shaft made from red Westerly granite, measures 2 ft 10 in x 1 ft 6 in x 8 ft 6 in. It was originally set at the site of one of Joy's favorite camping spots along the Lincoln Highway in Wyoming's Great Divide Basin west of Rawlins, where he had seen at beautiful sunset and expressed a desire to be buried there. That didn't happen, but his family did place the monument there following his death in 1936. The monument was moved in 2001 to protect it from increasing vandalism.

In its time, the Lincoln Highway became the nation's premier highway, as well-known as U.S. 66 was in its day and as I-80 and I-95 are today. Even though it never quite measured up to the dreams of its founders as one continuous highway, it was a marvel in itself and helped spur the nation's highway development.

1. Richard F. Weingroff, *The Lincoln Highway*, 11/18/2015, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/lincoln.cfm>.

Help Us Update Our New Program

We have been working to convert our membership data to a new program that is the standard for museum management. Like all computer updates, there will be glitches. Please inform us of any errors in your information.