

Lynnfield Historical Commission

ANNUAL REPORT – 2006

In June, the commission members visited the State Archives in Boston and viewed many interesting historic documents. Four replicas were purchased for display in the Town Hall, including the 1629 King James grant to establish Plimoth Colony, the 1775 Lynn Militia roster, the document from July 1782 that established Lynnfield as a parish separate from Lynn, and Lynnfield maps dated 1831 and 2004. Vice chairman James Borg retired from the commission after many years of faithful service.

For the first time, Lynnfield participated in the Essex National Heritage Commissions annual event *Trails and Sails: A Weekend of Walks and Water* in September. The commission organized an art exhibit of landscape paintings by local artists in the Meeting House. Edie Richard gave tours of the historic structure. Painters were to set up easels and work on the Common but weather did not allow.

In October the Historical Commission obtained a Partnership Grant Award for Heritage Preservation from the Essex National Historical Commission. This matching grant was used to begin the conservation, preservation, and restoration of the Old Burying Ground on South Common Street, the first of four of Lynnfield's five historic cemeteries to be treated. Jonathan Appell was hired with funds from the grant and prepared a Preservation Plan documenting the gravestones that required immediate preservation and repair. He followed up with a conservation workshop at the site in May of 2007. Many volunteers along with Commission members were taught basic cleaning and conservation methods, while Roy Sorli learned basic gravestone resetting techniques.

The time spent by the volunteers contributed to the required match funds along with money raised by the Commission through the ongoing Adopt-a-Family project and historic gravestone t-shirt sales. Non-toxic gravestone cleaner was purchased with these funds and more will be needed.

The Commission also has plans to restore the missing iron gates to the Old Burying Ground and West Cemetery and missing iron fence pieces surrounding a burial plot in South Cemetery.

Also in May, three Civil War era monument markers taken from the Perkins property were donated by the past owner Bernard Singer to the commission. Plans

are underway to purchase a granite column to display the markers and install it in West Cemetery. The Perkins House, originally constructed in 1694, was destroyed in November to make way for new construction. Lynnfield lost an important historic site and valuable asset.

The restoration of Freeman Park as an historic landmark is in the planning stage. According to Lynnfield: A Heritage Preserved, Freeman-Cox Park was added around 1935 to the park system created in 1918, which included Suntaug Park (renamed Newhall Park in 1956 after the accidental death of Tree Warden/Park Commissioner Donald F. Newhall), the Common at Lynnfield Center, and the Common at the junction of Salem and Broadway. The land for the Park was donated to the town by Dr. Franklin W. Freeman as a memorial for his son Willard James who was killed in WWI. Dr. Freeman was the first appointed school physician in 1908 after an act passed in 1906 by the General Court of Massachusetts, and 6 years later was appointed Special Health Officer. Ralph E. Cox was Road Commissioner from 1921 to 1948, then appointed by the selectmen, and in 1948 the first elected by voters. He served until 1953.

Faith and I would like to thank our wonderful retiring members Barbara Drozek, Edie Richard, and Ernestine June Rose who gave countless hours of dedication to the town of Lynnfield and our historical commission. We will greatly miss you.

Much work needs to be done to achieve our goals which restore to Lynnfield what is Lynnfield's – the reputation of a small town community with much sought after small town character, balanced with thoughtful growth and planning to make it prosper.