



Friends of Saxonville

Newsletter of The Friends of Saxonville, P.O. Box 3236, Framingham, MA, 01705-3236

Winter 2003

Discover Saxonville 2003 Fundraiser Saturday, May 31

*Art at the Athenaeum:
A benefit for the restoration of the Hall's interior
Exhibit, Auctions, and Gala*



Invitation and Call for Artists, Volunteers, and Supporters

Daytime: Paint the Town for Students. Framingham students from K-12 are encouraged to submit paintings representing anything related to the town of Framingham (landscapes, urban scenes, buildings, etc.). Student artwork will be on display in tents outside the Athenaeum. The Discover Saxonville committee is working with the Framingham schools to arrange for student participation. A deadline will be announced.

Evening: Live Auction and Silent Auction. Professional and amateur adult artists from the Metrowest area are invited to submit paintings for these auctions. The subject for paintings in the live auction is open – figure, floral, landscape, still life, etc. The silent auction will feature Paint the Town artwork. As with Paint the Town for students, the paintings should represent anything related to the town of Framingham. Both auctions will be juried by Ron Crusan, director and CEO of Danforth Museum of Art, and Heather Roy, director of Artana, an exhibition art gallery in Saxonville which hosts shows every six to eight weeks. Jurors' Choice, First, Second, and Third Places will be awarded. A professional auctioneer will preside. Interested artists should contact Jan Harrington at 508-877-0520 or giftbk@aol.com. Auction submissions will be accepted in photograph or slide format only. **The deadline for adults to submit artwork is April 25.**

Although invitations will be mailed for the evening gala, the general public is welcome at the door. There will be an admission charge of \$25 per person (\$50 per couple). A time for the public to preview the auction artwork will be scheduled. Saxonville's James Pelham will cater the event. Complimentary appetizers and desserts will be served, and there will be a wine bar. Local Saxonville musicians will provide background music, and Larson Marsh Design Group will arrange for decoration of the Athenaeum interior. Thanks to assistance from the town of Framingham, the event will be handicapped-accessible. The co-chairs of this event are Heather Roy of Artana and Jan Harrington, Friends of Saxonville board member.

Would you like to help at this event? Would you like to make a donation? Your contribution of funds, goods, or services will be gratefully welcomed. Please contact Jan Harrington at 508-877-0520 or giftbk@aol.com.

Watch for our ads, signs, and banner in the weeks ahead. To learn more about the event, visit www.saxonville.org and please join us at the Annual Meeting of the Friends of Saxonville on Tuesday, April 8, at 7:00 p.m. at the Stapleton School, Elm Street, Saxonville.

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The Cochituate Rail Trail Progress Report



2002 was a year of significant progress for the CRT! Here's a recap of achievements.

- Several workdays were held, helping to sustain a clear and open path.
- The trail "broke through" from School Street clear to Route 30.
- Information was distributed via color brochure, library display, Friends of Saxonville Annual Meeting & many community tables/booths.
- An on-demand pedestrian crossing/traffic light at Old Conn. Path has been designed, reviewed, and future-funded.
- A major obstruction, a concrete block "wall," was pushed back.
- Cochituate Brook bridges were assessed; bids for demo are being solicited. Plans for new decking are in the works.
- A lease for the MBTA section of the Trail is under review.
- The Mass Turnpike Authority easement/right of way remains in negotiation.

The Framingham CRT Committee always welcomes dedicated volunteers. If you'd like to learn more, please contact Charlene Frary at 508-877-3556.

Save the Date

**Tuesday
April 8, 2003**

Annual Meeting of the Friends of Saxonville

- ◆ 7:00 p.m. social
- ◆ 7:30 p.m. meeting
- ◆ Location: Stapleton School, Elm St.
- ◆ Speaker: Elsa Hornfischer
- ◆ Topics for discussion:
 - Development of a membership committee
 - Treasurer's report
 - Cochituate Rail Trail update
 - Board elections ... and more!

Please join us for what is always an enjoyable evening!

Friends of Saxonville Board of Directors



Jim Barry, President
Denis Black, Vice President
George Dixon, Treasurer
Charlene Frary, Secretary
Jan Harrington
Clóna McAlister
Brett Peruzzi
Susan Silva
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Friends of Saxonville Newsletter is published quarterly — Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall. Questions and comments about the newsletter, as well as submissions, are welcome and should be sent to the editor, Jean Maguire Boli, by email at jeantodd@rcn.com or by mail at Friends of Saxonville, P.O. Box 3236, Framingham, MA, 01705-3236. Visit the FOS on the Web at www.saxonville.org.



Saxonville's Children at Play: Winter Amusements of the 1940s & 50s



by *Cynthia Buscone*

When icicles loomed large on the front gutters of houses, and frost occasionally crept up *inside* the window panes of chilly rooms, Flexible Flyers and sleds too old and “seasoned” to bear any names at all, emerged from cellars, back halls, and barns with clothesline rope putters refurbished. Ice skates came down from pegs along the cellar way, and the trying-on party commenced to see which skates would belong to whom in that particular winter. Winter snowsuits and boots were readied for function and fun! Boots that went on over our shoes were sorted for winter owners — the boys had metal clip fasteners in front and the girls had zippers or button-and-elastic fasteners on theirs — but we always wore big warm woolen socks over our shoes and then jammed the whole assemblage into our boots for protection against the snow. All the girls’ snowsuits came equipped with snow pants, not just for winter fun, but because we walked everywhere and girls always wore dresses to school. Even my dress-up church coat had pretty green velvet close-fitting leggings, although I would not have dreamed of playing in the snow in those!

Thanks to the clicking needles of the Aunts, we’d have a good supply of caps and mittens, and some of the boys were lucky enough to have “aviator” helmets of leather or cloth with earflaps and visors, just like a pilot’s! At first, when we were younger, we’d suit up right in the warm kitchen and then coast on the gentle slope in our own back yard. If the autumn had been a wet one, we could even put our skates on in the kitchen and clump down to the river meadow where ice had formed among the grassy hummocks, but there were great places for coasting and skating all over town. Funny, we always called it coasting – never sledding or sliding. Kids talked about coasting down the “straight hill” onto Danforth Bridge, although that seemed too steep and scary to us at the time. Kids from “the blocks” could begin

a run at Chestnut Street and end up at the foot of the pasture near the river. Another neighborhood used A Street (then a dirt road), and we were lucky enough to have two possibilities — Bell’s Hill at School and Hamilton Streets, or the Haynes’ (Neal’s) Hill, across the river meadow, just below Danforth Park. Now, clearly, these hills belonged to other folks, but during the winter season everyone used them. No one said, “No trespassing!” and although we were good friends with the Neals, we didn’t know Farmer Bell and his family all that well.

Bell’s Hill was closer to our house, and Mummy could look right out the front window to check up on us. The coasting run started way up by the big barn, went over “The Bump” midway down the hill, and ended in a glassy glide across the little pond at the bottom of the hill. The fence kept the coasters off School Street in winter and Mr. Bell’s cows off it in summer! Sometimes we made sled trains, hitching rope handles to steering bars, and ended in a tumbled heap of sleds and people at the bottom of the hill. At other times we’d do belly flops, single or double down the hill. We could stay until we got really, really cold and wet, too, because home and cocoa were right across the street!

Haynes’ or Neal’s Hill seemed more exotic to us because it was further away. If the snow was fresh, we’d stick to a plowed road to get there — North Street. We could also go across the river meadow from the foot of School Street. However, our favorite route, if conditions were right, was through the back of St. George’s Church, left at the Grotto down the gully, up into McGrath’s back yard, and thence down North Street (just a dirt path then) past the Daly sisters’ house to the foot of the hill.

There were more treacherous aspects to this hill, which naturally, as we got older, made it far more alluring! For one thing, there was a brook at its foot, which almost never froze over, so a good soaking was a real possibility. At some point, Father Hillary, the Neals’ uncle

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The Remarkable Life of Michael Simpson

Part Two

These excerpts are taken from the pamphlet Michael H. Simpson and the Saxonville Mills with the Roxbury Carpet Co., by FOS member Gene B. Reid, published by the Framingham Historical Society in 1982. Part One of this article appeared in our Fall 2001 issue.

[In the 1850s], continuing to keep up with modern methods and exercising his inventive urges, Michael received a patent, #16864, for a wool combing machine. This was another improvement on Couillard's original machine. It added combing to the deburring process. The machine was larger and made of metal instead of wood. His contemporaries felt that his machines were the basis for much of the American wool industry. However, the Saxonville mills failed again in the panic of 1857. This time Michael stepped in and took full control. He convinced Nathaniel Francis to join him in buying up the entire Saxonville and Roxbury operations. Michael bought up two thirds and Francis took the other third.

Once again it was family affairs that took the fore. [On Feb. 7], 1859, Michael's eventual business successor was born — Frank Ernest Simpson. While Frank succeeded to the presidency of the mills, he was not to carry forth the family name. He never married and with him the Simpson line ended. His sister, Helen, did marry but she married a doctor in Cincinnati, Ohio (Dr. D.D. Seely) and moved away from Saxonville. She had at least two daughters. One, whose married name was Espy, still has descendants in Cincinnati.

Information for the period up to 1871 is sketchy, but in that year the *Framingham Gazette* began publication and we can follow the story more closely. In 1871, we find Michael is still listed as Agent, and now principal owner of the Saxonville Mills. J.W. Blake is Treasurer and John Simpson (a cousin) is superintendent; 475 hands are working at the mills, and there is a Boston office at 127 Milk Street. The ever-inventive Michael is reported to be planting the banks of the millpond dikes with milkweed, in-

tending to use them in some way to manufacture cloth. It was a busy year. Michael donated the fireworks for July 4th. Then, shortly afterward, there was a spectacular robbery. Thieves first broke into the home of S. S. Danforth, a mill manager. Next, they broke



Elizabeth Kilham Simpson

into John Simpson's house and took the keys to the mill offices after doping him with ether. They used the keys to enter the mill offices, taking \$3,000 and some locked boxes that contained some of the company's books.

In September, Michael donated the grounds for the new Edwards Chapel on Elm Street. [He] was also building a great deal of housing for the mill operatives, for which they would pay him rent. In January, 1872 there were more than sixty applications for this housing. In February, Number One mill burned to the ground, and it was feared for a while that the whole village would go up in flames. The villagers and mill hands put the fire out. They protected some of the nearby mill buildings by spreading wool blankets on their roofs and soaking them with water.

One of the large row houses at the foot of Danforth Street was finished in October. It was described as 30' x 140' and as having seven tenements (it still has seven front doors). The building projects continued into 1873 when the newspapers commented that Michael "appears to want them to be models of comfort and convenience."

In the Framingham town vital statistics for 1874, we find that ... the mills paid the highest taxes in town, \$3,679.39, indicating that Saxonville was the industrial center of all of Framingham. Framingham had a population of 5,167 in 1875, [and] fully ten percent of the whole population was employed by the mills. The middle 1870s saw the beginning of a dull

business period, but Michael kept his building projects going. It was at this time that he began the extension of his estate parks and drives, which became known as Wildwood Park. He had a gang of young men called the Modocs, headed by "Captain Jack," that did the landscape projects for him. They were young enough to play against the grammar school kids in sports and games, and the locals called their work "toiling in the lava pits." Michael had his own version of the Works Progress Administration and was head of his own Civil Conservation Corp. But he had labor trouble at the mill. He had reduced wages and some of the female operatives went on strike. He took the opportunity to close the mills for repairs. The warehouses were full, so why should he care if the mills weren't operating? However, in only two weeks the repair work was finished, the mill reopened, and the strikers given their increase. Michael was also involved in education. In one of the few mentions of Elizabeth in the Framingham papers, we find that both of them were on the Board of Trustees of Wellesley College in 1875. They were each on the Board until their deaths.

Always interested in bettering the equipment in the mills, Michael became the assignee for a new invention (patent #171,147 by Albert Leavitt), a wax thread sewing machine. There were several reports of his farming activity, too. In 1876 it was reported that he had the largest windmill in the state that was used for grinding corn and pumping water to his reservoir. The water was then piped to his house. He had sheep, eleven yoke of oxen, and as many as fifteen hogs. In April 1876, his partner in the mills, Nathaniel Francis, died in Boston but it is unknown what became of his share. In this same year, Michael was identified by the newspaper as an earnest Republican and was writing letters warning of the economic effects of not electing Republicans. Business was very dull. In economic terms, the period

is considered a secondary post-war depression of the Civil War.

On June 23, 1878, his wife Elizabeth suddenly died. When she died, Frank had just left on a European tour. The death was unexpected and Frank returned as soon as he heard. The mills were closed for a day and there was a long, sad eulogy for her in the Boston and Framingham newspapers. No facts were given about her activities except to say she was "always prominent in the exercise of good works." As a memorial to her, Michael donated the money to have a dormitory built on the Wellesley campus and named it Simpson Hall. In August of 1878, Simpson Drive was opened [in Saxonville]. It ran for a mile and a half upstream along the bank of the Sudbury River.



Frank Ernest Simpson
(Harvard Univ. Archives)

Michael's mechanical interests ranged into everything he did. He received patent #198,420 for a grasshopper catcher in 1877. In 1880, his land development continued. He had fifty men working on one piece of property purchased from K. M. Marrs; he purchased the old Methodist Church and parsonage (at the end of Church Street, now Fuller, on the east side of the mill) for \$3,000 to convert them to more tenements; he built a hall for the Saxonville Band; built an experimental silo; and started work on the Simpson Block of stores. More inventions included a machine for killing potato bugs, automatically opening gates, and something to make long rides in cars more comfortable. His philanthropies included giving the new Methodist Church a tapestry carpet from the Roxbury Carpet Mill and [donating money to Newburyport for various town projects]. For himself, he had a beach cottage built on Plum Island. A very busy year for a seventy-one-year-old man. In fact, the newspaper specifically noted he was "remarkably well preserved in body and mind for his age and is keeping up with literature." The year 1880 was a happy one for Michael and the village of Saxonville in regard to one family matter. After a year in Harvard Law School, Frank decided to forsake a career in law and devote his life to the mills

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SCHOOL DAYS

Saxonville! Saxonville! Best school in the land!

Edmund Cadorette's family has a long history in Saxonville. His mother and her five brothers grew up here, and although Edmund himself moved away for a while, by fourth grade he was back and attending Saxonville School. His was the first eighth-grade class (1954) not to graduate from Saxonville Junior High as ninth graders. All junior-high students were transferred to Memorial School, as school populations soared during the post-World War II years. Profound a change as that may have been, he remembers it was a no-nonsense, no-argument adjustment for the Saxonville students who then traveled by B & W bus to the far side of town to be heartily welcomed by the students and faculty at Memorial School.

Ed recently retired following a distinguished forty-year career in education in the Framingham School System, ultimately as principal of the Brophy School, where the school courtyard is named in his honor. He continues to enjoy living in Saxonville.

Saxonville School Days: Three Generations

by *Edmund Cadorette*

Being the middle member of three generations who attended Saxonville School makes for some interesting stories. My mother, Esther Morrissey Cadorette, and her five brothers became the first generation of our family to attend the school. Mom was a classmate of Mary Stapleton, for whom the school is named, and also of Alice Mabie Shock, who lived all her life on Concord Street next to the river.

My experience started in the old four-room wooden building once in the rear of the school. In those days the school went from grades one through nine. No school buses delivered or returned students to their homes. Everyone walked home for lunch. A few students, all the way from Potter Road, brought their lunches and ate in the lower hall. Our class was the first ninth-grade class to be moved out of the school to Memorial School because of overcrowding. B & W buses took us to and from school. My sixth-grade teacher, Gert Falby, went on to become my teaching colleague at Winch Park when the sixth-grade classes were relocated



*Esther Morrissey and her mother
Virginia, Saxonville, 1918*

there in 1964. The Brophy sisters (Rosemary and Anna) taught math and art at the old school. Several years later I spent the better part of my teaching career in a school named after them!

Playground activities revolved around a substantial jungle gym, seesaws, and a metal "merry-go-round." None of these will be seen on any playground today! Baseball was played off the school grounds in open fields. Skating and hockey took place on Silver Lake and the Barney (now the Pinefield Shopping Center). On Danforth Street, Flexible Flyers provided downhill excitement with their metal runners. Mom always reminded me of the broken nose she got as a child while sledding there. As spring arrived, wide-tired Schwinn's provided mobility.

The family's connection continued when our daughter Michelle attended Saxonville School from kindergarten through grade five. Her second-grade teacher was Kay Madden, who had been my fifth-grade teacher at the beginning of her career. In the 1970s, when a major renovation and addition to the school took place, it was renamed in honor of Dr. Mary Stapleton. On the evening when the renaming of the school was celebrated, Michelle had the honor of presenting flowers to Dr. Stapleton. At the time, the princi-

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and the village. The mills in Saxonville were producing white and gray blankets, worsted carpet yarn and haircloth overcoats. Frank decided to stay in the village through the winter to learn the business better. The Saxonville cottage was referred to as Chestnut Cottage and as being on Cottage Hill. It is in a visit to there that the first mention of the Seelys is made. A newspaper item in the summer of 1880 says that the family of Dr. W.W. Seely has arrived for their annual visit from Cincinnati. (Helen Simpson married a Dr. D.D. Seely.) They stayed all summer. [Michael's daughter] Grace went off to Europe for the summer of 1881, Michael took delivery of a steam yacht on Simpson Pond (the millpond?), and Frank is said to have been recuperating (from some unmentioned illness) by riding daily on the new saddle horse he brought back from his long hunting tour.

The climax of Michael's life and career began in 1882. On June 1st he married a twenty-

seven-year-old Saxonville woman named Evangeline E. Thurston Marrs; he was almost seventy-three. They were married by Rev. Lucius Eastman of Framingham and the wedding was quite an affair according to the newspaper. They went off to Europe for their honeymoon. He ordered the construction of an enormous mansion for her, overlooking the Dudley Pond on Old Connecticut Path, just over the town line in Wayland. It was 50' x 200' and cost about \$150,000 (the equivalent of several million dollars today). It is noted in [a] Wayland history that he had public water brought into the new building and made it possible for the local residents to connect to it, too. There was a good deal of talk and gossip in town about their marriage because of the age difference. The newspaper thought it was an honest marriage and felt Evangeline truly cared for Michael. However, in the Saxonville Horribles Parade someone made fun of the couple by dressing as May and November. Michael was apparently very hurt by this and one version states that he never lived in the new mansion as a result.

Winter Amusements continued from page 3

who often visited, began digging out a spot for a tennis court and there came to be a precipitous "jump" on the hill — not for the faint of heart! Then there was the remnant of an apple orchard. Kate Neal reported that Billy Carey never let a winter go by without smacking into the apple tree at the foot of the hill and getting a bloody nose, but he would return undeterred the next year to repeat the performance!

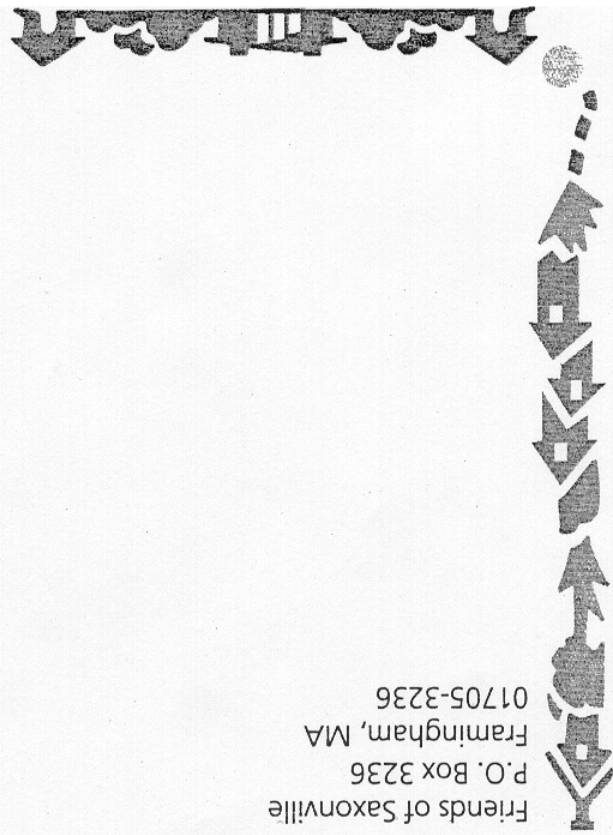
Sometimes we could get such a great start by running at the top of the hill and hurling ourselves face first onto the sleds, that we'd swoop down the slope, pass the apple tree, turn hard right, and end in a spray of snow, almost as far as the plank bridge that spanned the brook in the river meadow! Then home we'd head to hang our soaking mittens on the metal rack at one end of the black stove in the kitchen, put our boots on newspaper underneath, and cozy our own selves near the oven door or lean against the cylindrical hot water heater that stood in a corner near the stove as we waited for the simmering beef stew and bran muffins to be ready for our winter supper, and maybe, just maybe, Mummy would have made chocolate pudding, too!

Mystery of the Little Shop

In response to our query regarding the history of the small School Street building depicted in Paul Devine's drawing (Fall 2002 issue), Cynthia Buscone tells us the following. "In the '30s it belonged to someone in the Hayes' family (Trippy, perhaps?) and was used as a gas station. After the war, Sam Costa ran it — it was the "bread and milk" store but also had a soda box with ice cold tonic and Hoodsies whose covers' interiors featured movie stars' faces protected by the thinnest of tissue papers. Later still it was called Jo-Ed's Luncheonette. It still had the essentials but also made sandwiches.

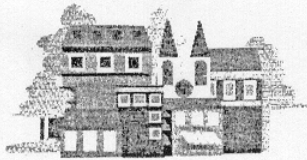
School Days continued from page 6

pal of the school was Carol Getchell [the late co-founder of FOS]. To round out all of these connections, it may be interesting to note that my wife, Judy, and Carol taught together at the Juniper Hill School at the beginning of their careers. These relationships over three generations have been very meaningful to all of us.



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"The mission of the Friends of Saxonville, Inc., is to educate the public about the special identity of Saxonville, an historic neighborhood of Framingham, Massachusetts, and to preserve, enhance, and protect its cultural, environmental, and historical qualities."



Friends of Saxonville Membership Form

P.O. Box 3236, Framingham, MA. 01705-3236

Name _____ Street _____

Town _____ ZIP _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

E- Mail _____

Contribution \$ _____ (minimum annual dues are \$15)

Interests:

- Athenaeum
- Nature Trail
- Fund Raising
- Danforth Bridge
- Cochituate Rail Trail