*Harbor View*

TOWNSEND, MA HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 1999

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**Homestead gardens being renovated and restored**

*By Priscilla H. Williams*

As time marches on to the next century, we are turning the clocks back in the Reed Homestead gardens to the end of the 19th century. Changes are afoot with the approval of the Historical Society Board of Directors.

Last summer the (east) side entry garden featured many of the plants listed on a seed list of annual flowers published in 1890 by Milton Fisk of Lunenburg. Seeds were offered for sale at five cents per packet. We assume that the 1890 list found in a Reed Homestead cupboard belonged to Miss Harriet J. Reed, the owner and occupant at that time.

Further research this winter turned up two additional seed lists by Mr. Fisk dated 1892 and 1894, unearthed at the Lunenburg Historical Society. These lists are more extensive and feature such new varieties as Nigella (Love in a Mist), Celosia cristata (Japan cockscomb, a bright scarlet), and Sweet Peas.

Mr. Fisk was born in Heath, Massachusetts, to Daniel P. and Eliza Cheney Fisk in 1838. He came to Lunenburg at age 24 in 1862, according to the town tax records. He was assessed $1.62 in taxes that year! His brother fought in the Civil War, but Mr. Fisk is not listed among the local men who served as soldiers.

By 1864 he was taxed for land and a dwelling house at the rate of $4.70. Evidently his mother, a widow, made her home with him; Mr. Fisk never married.

He started his seed list in 1884 (the 1890 list states that it is his seventh). In 1892 he took a partner, a Mr. Farrar, and the business was taxed for a house, barn, greenhouse and land plus machinery, a horse and a cow to the tune of $13.58. A steam boiler was added in 1894, perhaps to heat the greenhouse?

By 1895, Mr. Fisk was on his own again and kept the greenhouse and seed/flower business going through 1900. After that date there are no tax listings for any of the earlier business components. Mr. Fisk died March 11, 1903.

(Many thanks to G. Barry Whitcomb of the Lunenburg Historical Society for his help in researching Mr. Fisk.)

**Other Landscape Changes**

In September the front garden was revamped. Nine of Mrs. Harriet Reed Strout’s peonies were lifted to the proper level for blooming. Additional perennials of the period, such as delphinium, phlox and an offset of one of the yucca plants on the property, were added. The front garden now occupies a wide corner against two sides of the picket fence. It would have greeted guests entering by the front gate to visit in the parlor.

Grass seed was planted in the former triangle garden area in the fall after the soil was improved with compost. A double flowering almond shrub has been located to plant at the base of the lamppost, and a small rose will be encouraged to climb.

The non-period foundation plantings of hemlock and euonymus growing against the front wall have been removed. Remaining stumps will be ground down this spring so that the area can be dug up and soil amended. The existing ostrich fern plantings will be left in situ. The white lilac on the property will be pruned down to rejuvenate its growth and moved in front of the electric box.

Plantings of hostas appropriate to the 1890s will be installed next to the front doorstep during the summer. In the fall, grape hyacinths and scilla will be added as underplantings.

Spring visitors to the Reed Homestead may have noticed new blooming bulbs in the side dooryard. Prominently featured were double yellow daffodils descended from plants that originally grew both at the Reed House and next door in Mrs. Strout’s time. These were donated by Jane Stonefield. Other bulbs planted included the daffodil ‘Sir Watkin’ (documented from 1884), Crocus vernus ‘King of the Striped’ (1880), Crocus angustifolius ‘Cloth of Gold’ (offered in most bulb catalogues of the 1800s), Muscari botryoides (grape hyacinth, pre-1878), Crocus vernus purpureus grandiflora (1870), and Scilla siberica ‘Spring Beauty,’ a feature of Mrs. Strout’s garden.

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**Don’t miss it!**

Plant Sale on May 15 9 a.m. to noon at  
The Reed Homestead  \Rt. 119 Townsend Harbor, MA
**Museum Store reopens**

*By Clare Kauppi*

The Museum Store of the Townsend Historical Society reopened on Saturday, May 1st. Store hours will be 12 noon to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

New merchandise for this season includes the first of our exclusive collection of miniature historic buildings of Townsend featuring The Cooperage. The second building is scheduled to be released in July.

Of course we have our great selection of books, early maps of the town, along with table laces, flag wind socks of different nationalities, our tubs, and an exquisite selection of handcrafted jewelry.

Opening day is the start of our May sale. Many items will be reduced for this month only. Don't miss out on the great savings. Come by the Museum Store located in The Harbor Church, route 119, Townsend Harbor.

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**“Savory Suppers and Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America”**

*By Jeannie Bartovics*

If you have ever puzzled over a place setting at a formal dinner, or wondered how some of our more elaborate dining rituals originated, come to the slide program and talk to be given by Susan Williams for the Society on Sunday, May 16 at 2 p.m. in the West Townsend Reading Room.

Williams, who is Assistant Professor of History at Fitchburg State College, will draw from her book "Savory Suppers and Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America."

A Victorian tea buffet, featuring "sweets and savories" based on authentic 19th century recipes, will be served following the program.

Participants are invited to bring in Victorian dining implements or table accessories to learn what they are and how they were used.

Tickets are $12 for members, $15 for non-members. Reservations, which are required, may be made by calling the Townsend Historical Society office at 978-597-2106.
COMING EVENTS

* Wed. & Thurs.  May 5, 6  THS Museum Complex – Townsend Harbor
THIRD GRADE CLASS VISITS

* Saturday  May 15  9 a.m.-12 noon  Reed Homestead
SECOND ANNUAL PLANT SALE
Plants provided by “The Seedling Specialist” Priscilla Williams.
Includes many varieties to be grown at the Reed Homestead this summer.

* Sunday  May 16  2 p.m.  W. Townsend Reading Room
“SAVORY SUPPERS AND FABULOUS FEASTS:
DINING IN VICTORIAN AMERICA”
Talk and slide program followed by Victorian tea buffet.
M $12 NM $15  Reservations required: 978-597-2106

Sat. & Sun.  June 5, 6  Reed Homestead
GARDEN PLANTING  Free!

Free passes to historic sites
Free entrance to properties of the Society for the Preservation of
New England Antiquities is an advantage of membership in the Society.
Passes are available at the Reed Homestead office 978-597-2106.
Nearby sites include: Barrett House, New Ipswich, NH; Lyman
Estate, Walhalm, MA; Codman House, Lincoln, MA; Gropius House,
Lincoln, MA.

Garden Volunteers Needed
Come join the fun in the gardens.

Volunteers are sought to help with our second annual plant
sale on Saturday, May 15, from 9 am to 12 noon. Priscilla
Williams, The Seedling Specialist, will be supplying the plants for
sale, including many varieties which will be grown at the Reed
Homestead this summer.

Then join in the annual dooryard garden planting project on
Saturday, June 5 and Sunday, June 6. Priscilla will provide the
plants and the garden design. Many hands make light work, and
full planting instructions will be demonstrated. This is a good
chance to sharpen your skills and learn more about the old-
fashioned varieties we are installing.

In addition, help is needed weekly to assist with
deadheading, edging, and staking in both the dooryard and parlor
gardens. This can be done on your own time. Training will be
offered. A weekly schedule will be set up for June through
September. Please call Priscilla or Rich Williams at 597-3005 to
get more details and to sign up for these great opportunities.

Published quarterly by The
Townsend, MA Historical Society.
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Editor: Alice Avery Struthers
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1999

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Reed Homestead Historic House Museum
72 Main Street  Townsend Harbor, MA 01469  978-597-2106

Guided Tours of the Homestead
11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday
or by appointment

The Museum Store
Located in The Harbor Church  Saturday & Sunday  12 – 4 p.m.

Office Hours
Tuesday through Friday  9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

1999 Membership Form
Townsend Historical Society, Inc., POBox 95, Townsend, MA 01469
Name_______________________________
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☐ Student/Senior - $5.00  ☐ Family - $25.00
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