

FRIENDS OF SAXONVILLE

NEWSLETTER • WINTER 2013

Discover Saxonville's Athenaeum:

Community, Culture, and Cuisine

by John Stasik

On a balmy Saturday evening in October the Friends of Saxonville enjoyed Community, Culture and Cuisine in the Mass Ballet Studio located in the Saxonville Mills. This Discover Saxonville event was designed to bring special attention and new resources to restoring the Athenaeum Hall.

For over 140 years the Athenaeum served as a Community Hall to all of Framingham. For the last 25 years however, the hall has been closed to the public. Yet, the need for community sharing is greater now than ever. The Town of Framingham and The Friends are working closely together to return the Athenaeum to public service.

Those attending the event – and many others who could not attend – demonstrated their support of the restoration of the Athenaeum in a variety of ways. Mass Ballet hosted the event, opening their spacious and inviting studio for our use.

The Hunt Trio offered a delightful concert of harp-sichord and flute sonatas. Interim Furnishing provided furniture allowing for comfortable conversation. Much of the food and all beverages were donated by local vendors. Volunteers performed countless tasks to insure a smooth operation and there were many contributions to the



Chef Arroco of Culinary Artworks. © Damianos Photography

Athenaeum Restoration Fund.

Together this generosity and good will created a festive event demonstrating just one example of an activity that could become a routine part of community life in Framingham – once the Athenaeum is restored. Visit www.Saxonville.org, to view more photos of the event.

The Friends are grateful for your support and encouragement. We are committed to do all that we can to preserve the form and function of this historic treasure for all Framingham residents.

(continued on p. 4)

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Saxonville Realty Trust – Business Member Feature

by Kevin Swope

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of when the Finley family and the Saxonville Realty Trust (SRT) took over ownership of the Saxonville Industrial Park. The old mills at the falls in the Sudbury River not only dominate today's village, but drove the settlement of Saxonville and even supplied its name. Therefore it is fitting that the Saxonville Realty Trust is a proud business member of the Friends of Saxonville.



On March 30, 1973, Roxbury Carpet Company ended its operations. The next day, Roxbury's final manager, Phil deGozzaldi, turned the keys over to ... himself. He was the junior partner in the new Saxonville Realty Trust, whose majority owner was Creative Development, Inc. John H. Finley III had founded Creative Development three years earlier. Finley

provided the real estate know-how while deGozzaldi provided knowledge of the mill where he had practically grown up and connections to the Roxbury executives who were selling the property.

Before coming to Saxonville, Finley's company owned and managed two buildings totaling 20,000 square feet. The mill complex was twenty times larger. The early 1970s were hardly boom times in Massachusetts, and the partners had their work cut out for them. "In the early days we were in the used machinery business," recalled Finley. Tons of old mill equipment had to be dismantled and removed before the space could be made rentable. Another challenge was the layout of the factory itself. It was like a tube where raw wool would go in one end, and finished carpets would come out the other. Finley installed an elevator and converted areas around the complex into loading docks and entrances to accommodate prospective tenants.

There were twelve tenants by August 1973. Two businesses operated by deGozzaldi harkened back to the mill's history: the Sudbury River Dye Works and a



(Left, above right and below right) The historic Saxonville Mill complex, as seen from many vantage points. © Damianos Photography

carpet outlet store. Other businesses were completely new to Saxonville, including Goodwin's Furniture Store, Ace Plumbing and Heating, International Furniture Rentals, the Ster'I-Dri Corporation (manufacturers of germ-free sports underwear), and Foster-Miller, a Waltham-based robotics manufacturer. The eclectic mix established then continues to this day, with a ballet studio and baseball academy side by side with more traditional commercial and light industrial businesses. Another former tenant was the venerable New England Historic Genealogical Society.

The establishment of the Saxonville Studios in 1989 added a little bit of the artistic atmosphere Finley had envisioned for the mill back in 1973. Many tenants



John H. Finley III and Sam Finley. © Damianos Photography

have come and gone, but the mill has been “basically full” for the past twenty years, according to Finley. With the passing of Phil deGozzaldi in 2012, the complex is now 100% owned by Creative Development. Day-to-day management of the complex had already been handed over to a new generation: Charlotte Finley Maynard began working with her father in 1997, although she had essentially grown up with the mill with her birth more or less coinciding with the purchase of the property. It is Charlotte who deals with the issues arising from a constantly shifting customer base of seventy tenants: “Every month we gain a new tenant or lose an old one, or a tenant wants to expand or contract their space. Thank God for the Creative Development Company maintenance crew. They have helped retrofit the heat, redo every window, re-side, re-point, re-frame; you name it, they have done it!”

In 2010 Charlotte's brother Sam Finley took on a more active interest in the family company. His suggestion that the mill's enormous flat roof would be perfect for a solar array was met with skepticism. “My father and I scoffed,” recalls Charlotte. But after much research with various solar companies, products, and banks, Sam helped to build the largest solar roof array in Massachusetts



Charlotte Finley Maynard. © Damianos Photography

Another potential source of green energy lies beneath the ground. The 19th century tunnel that channeled water from the Sudbury River to power the looms is still intact. The turbine is located beneath the space leased to MTechnology. Steve Fairfax, MTechnology's owner and president of MTechnology and mill tenant since 1997, has done extensive research into the possibilities of reharnessing the river's power to produce electricity. As with the solar project, there are numerous challenges to be overcome. In this instance the infrastructure is largely already there. Instead it is the question of receiving regulatory approval and the economics of applying for the literally dozens of permits required. Nonetheless, Fairfax remains hopeful that someday that hydropower will return to Saxonville.

As these recent initiatives prove, forty years after purchasing the mills Creative Development still lives up to its name. ❖

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Discover Saxonville's Athenaeum

Community, Culture, and Cuisine *(continued from cover)*



FOS Treasurer Paula Longden.
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(Above) Jennifer A. and Janet E. Hunt of the Hunt Trio. (Below) Jennifer A. and Leslie L. Hunt of the Hunt Trio. © Damianos Photography

Special thanks to:

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Entertainers: Janet Hunt and The Hunt Trio

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Framingham Town Meeting member Elizabeth Funk and Senator Karen Spilka. © John Stasik

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The Athenaeum Corner

by John Stasik

Many members may recall the initial motivation for creating the Friends of Saxonville organization was to restore the Athenaeum Community Hall to its original purpose and stature. In 1998, the building had been closed to the public for nearly ten years and it was steadily deteriorating. After much collaboration and steadfast effort, significant change is now underway. The Athenaeum Corner is our quarterly update on the progress of the restoration project.

In 1996, Town Meeting, with Massachusetts Historic Funding, invested substantially in the first steps toward restoration, which resulted in the strengthening of the Hall's framework and the installing of a new slate roof. Subsequently, the Friends of Saxonville enlisted volunteers and sought donations of paint. With the professional assistance of the crew from the Saxonville Mills next door, the Athenaeum had a fresh new exterior by the fall of 2000. Visible improvements were made. In 2007, the Friends again led the effort to paint the building, this time, restoring its original colors. From the outside, the building looked impressive; however, the Hall was still closed to the public. The untouched interior remained unsafe and unusable.

In January of this year the Executive Board of the Friends created the Athenaeum Task Force consisting of Board members Dave Longden, John Stasik, Jan Harrington, Steve Weisman and founding President Jim Barry, as well as Jerry Couto, President of the Historic Commission. The Town Manager assigned the Director of The Department of Planning and Economic Development to work with the Task Force to secure a warrant article in Town Meeting to fund the first phase of the project, namely, the preparation of the required architectural and

construction documents. In February, the Selectmen approved the warrant article and Town Meeting approved the article in May.

The Task Force then worked with the Town to specify certain design criteria that should be included in the initial Request for Qualifications (RFQ), based upon our anticipated use of the building. The RFQ documents are expected to be released this year. The Architect will be chosen in early 2014 and Construction Documents will be prepared for Town Meeting in 2014. Stay tuned for updates on the current status of the project.

At this point, the Friends of Saxonville's role in the restoration process is:

- **To raise funds to assist the Town in the restoration and operation of the Hall**
- **To build public support for the project**
- **To promote and encourage public use of the Hall.**

So far The Friends have organized a successful benefit reception and concert to raise funds for The Athenaeum (see more about this on cover and page 4).

You can take a significant action to support the Athenaeum Restoration Project by joining The Friends of Saxonville or by renewing your annual membership by May 1st. Nothing speaks more clearly to both public and private granting institutions than high levels of community support for the applying organization. And, there is no better indication of support than paid membership!

Finally, as you talk with your neighbors across the back fence or while you are walking the dog, bring up the Friends of Saxonville and the work we do to enhance the culture and commerce of Saxonville and of the entire Framingham community. Invite them to join us. And we invite you to join us quarterly in The Athenaeum Corner. ❖

Vibes from the Village • by Mary McCarty

- **Mark your calendars for Jingle Bell Day on Saturday, December 14. Visit www.Saxonville.com for details.**
- **We are sorry to see Expressions Kitchen Design and Zeta's leave the Village. They will be missed and we wish them every success in the future.**
- **What a joy to drive through McGrath Square with no street digging!**



FRIENDS OF SAXONVILLE

The mission of the Friends of Saxonville 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, economic, environmental and historical qualities.

Membership fees help support our initiatives, newsletter, and our annual Discover Saxonville events.

Please renew your membership or consider joining us for the first time. If you renewed already – Thank you!

If your membership is not up to date, this may be the last newsletter you will receive.

Memberships or Donations:

Pay online at **www.Saxonville.org**

Or detach form below and mail your check to:

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

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Trivia Question

by Lynne Damianos

Michael, Alfred, Joseph and Nicholas Roads were named after the sons of what family? Where did the family live?





FRIENDS OF SAXONVILLE

P.O. Box 3236
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Visit us on the web!
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Horse drawn wagon rides depart from Robinsons Hardware at Jingle Bell Day 2012. © John Stasik

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Athenaeum Pint and Wine Glasses for Sale

by Lynne Damianos

Saxonville Athenaeum wine and pint glasses are available for \$10 each. Email Paula Longden to purchase and for delivery options. Sales support the Saxonville Athenaeum renovation project.



Saxonville Athenaeum wine and pint glasses. © Damianos Photography

Jingle Bell Day 2013

Fun for the whole family starts at noon at Pinefield Shopping Plaza. Horse drawn wagon rides, specials, bargains, events and The Friends Cafe! Don't miss it! For more details, visit www.Saxonville.org.

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