

Friends of Saxonville

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

Winter 2001

Growing Up in Saxonville: An Oral History

Carl Crafts lived in Saxonville in the early 1900s. His oral history was recorded by Alice Kessler Shull, a teacher at the Stapleton School in Saxonville. Alice was visiting her mother in Los Angeles in 1996 when she interviewed Carl and taped his delightful, informative remarks.



I am sometimes asked "if anything happened in Saxonville to you that made you happy or unhappy."

My answer: I was asked by my first grade teacher to sing a solo in honor of our school janitor who was a soldier in the Civil War. It was a few days before Memorial Day and my song was:



A view of Danforth Street, where Carl Crafts lived, with Saxonville Mill in the background.

2001 Annual Meeting Scheduled for April 10

Mark your calendar! The next FOS Annual Meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 10, 7:30-9:30 at the auditorium of the Stapleton School on Elm St. in Saxonville. Program includes speaker, updates on FOS projects and events, and election of officers — nominations invited! Bring a friend and help us celebrate the past year's achievements and set our course for the future.

Tenting tonight, tenting tonight.
Tenting on the old camp grounds.

My voice was thin, but I sang it loud and it was received with enthusiasm. My voice only trembled slightly. The former soldier, now janitor, was pleased and he embraced and thanked me and said hello to me whenever he saw me.

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Artana Brings New England Art to Saxonville

by Todd Boli

Today's art and artists of New England have found a new home here in Saxonville. Located since June of last year at the foot of Elm Street in the village's historic center, Artana has been bringing the newest and most creative expressions of regional painting, sculpture, jewelry, glass, porcelain, and stoneware to Framingham's growing community of art admirers and collectors. "Our mission," says director Heather Roy, "is to create a retail venue for artists to make a living from what they love most: creating art." For Roy, marketing and sales organization are not just business techniques but ways of bringing greater recognition to New England art.

Artana's sixth show, "The ME in fEMininity," a show by and about women, exemplifies the stylistic panorama that is the gallery's hallmark. From Candice Smith Corby's conceptual installation to the representational paintings of Laura Schiff



Heather Roy, director of Artana, with art from the silent auction held Feb. 1-13. All proceeds to benefit WIN.

Bean and Gina Heeren, the show embraces a wide range of styles and techniques that run from the avant-garde to the more traditional. Artana will donate a quarter of the show's revenues to the Women's Independence Network (WIN), a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to eradicating domestic violence in the Metrowest area. The show runs through March 10.

Past exhibits have included "Foliage: From Green to Ground," "More or Less About Nature," and "New England Landscapes and Seascapes." This last show even featured a local artist, Lynette Haggard, who paints at the Saxonville Studios in the old Roxbury Carpet Mill. Artana also makes common cause with other Framingham artistic and cultural initiatives. On behalf of the Danforth Museum, Artana recently hosted a social at which the paintings of Danforth instructor Cheryl Clinton were on exhibit.

Heather Roy discovered Saxonville while driving down Elm Street on her way from Sudbury to Ashland. She was delighted by our village's Victorian architecture, historic mill-town character, and special "home town feeling." She saw a "for rent" sign in the window at 3 Elm Street, and the next day agreed with owner Charles Greene to move her business in as his new tenant. "When I first looked at the space," she says, "I felt it was telling me, 'art wants to live here.'" The feeling was apparently mutual, as Greene was looking for someone in the arts to take the space. Roy credits Greene with the vision that she feels is typical of Saxonville. She is pleased to see that people in Saxonville don't just let properties in the village get used in a thoughtless, haphazard way but have an idea of what our community can become and how they can play a part.

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Making the Cochituate Rail Trail a Reality

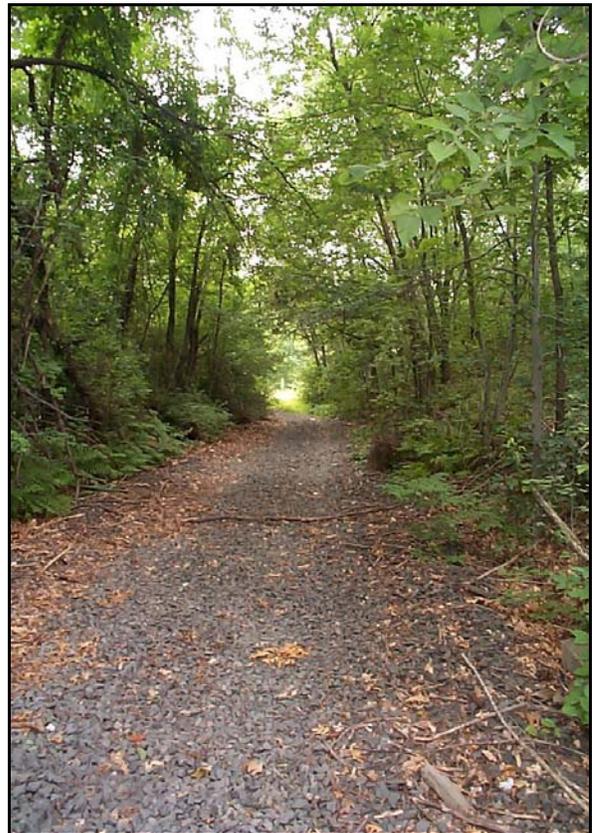
by Bryan Taberner

Development of the Cochituate Rail Trail has been talked about for several years. The proposed trail is 3.8 miles long and will utilize a railroad right of way in the towns of Framingham and Natick. It was hoped the Rail Trail would connect downtown Natick with the Route 9/Speen Street area, continue under the Massachusetts Turnpike to Framingham's Cochituate Brook Conservation Area, and end near the Sudbury River in Saxonville. However, the Natick portion of the railroad right of way is still used occasionally, so development of the Rail Trail in that area is not likely to happen in the near future.

The Framingham Planning Department is currently developing plans for the Rail Trail portions within Framingham. These sections are 1) the right of way from the Natick/Framingham line to the Mass Turnpike, owned by the Mass Turnpike Authority, and 2) the right of way north of the Mass Turnpike to Saxonville, owned by the MBTA. Development of both sections would provide Framingham with a 1.3-mile long linear park.

The first section will provide an off-road link from the Route 9/Speen Street urban environment to Framingham's Cochituate Brook Conservation Area north of the Turnpike. Cochituate Brook Conservation Area is the location of several existing and proposed hiking trails that will link a number of open space/passive recreational facilities including Cochituate State Park, the proposed Snake Brook Trail in Natick, and Framingham's Reardon Park. The second section of right of way will continue north from the Cochituate Brook Conservation Area, cross Old Connecticut Path, Cochituate Brook in two locations, and School Street at Concord Street, and end at the Sudbury River in Saxonville. Plans call for development of three pocket parks along the Rail Trail, including one at its north end at the Sudbury River. From the northern end of the Rail Trail, an additional trail will be developed along Saxonville's flood levee that would end at the Danforth Street Bridge and the Saxonville Nature Trail.

Development and use of the Cochituate Rail Trail will add a new dimension to the community. Area business employees could use the Rail Trail and connecting trails for exercising and unwinding at



lunchtime, as well as before and after work. The trail system will be an enjoyable place for families to hike and enjoy nature together. The trail development project will increase awareness of Cochituate Brook Conservation Area and Reardon Park, and it will encourage area residents to become responsible stewards of the natural environment. Along the Rail Trail are opportunities to study riverway and wetland protection, biodiversity, and landscape interpretation.

The Framingham Planning Department is now developing a Rail Trail Development and Management Plan. This plan will be further improved and implemented by a Trail Review Committee. In addition to project planning, management, and implementation, the Trail Review Committee will seek funding and assistance from various public and private entities. The Town recently received a \$20,000 grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management to develop the Rail Trail. We are in need of a \$20,000 local match for this grant; the match can be in the form of donations of cash, materials, and labor from local residents, non-profit organizations, and Town Departments.

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Call for Volunteers

There are volunteer opportunities now available with the Friends of Saxonville for anyone who enjoys working with an exciting, friendly, and productive group. Whatever your interests and skills might be, there is sure to be a spot for you on the team! You can participate in a variety of activities or focus on just one project. Athenaeum, Nature Trail, Danforth Bridge, special events, etc. — join the fun!

Rail Trail

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The Rail Trail will soon be a reality. The quality of the linear park and trail is totally dependent upon the commitment of local individuals and organizations. The Planning Department is hopeful that by Sept. 30, 2001, the Town will have opened the whole right of way to hikers. In following years, the right of way could be developed into a combined bicycle/pedestrian trail. Improvements to the trail at that time would include widening and surfacing the trail with an appropriate material, as well as additional landscape and access improvements that would open the trail to all Framingham residents, including handicapped individuals.

A solid partnership consisting of public entities, residents, and local businesses is required for this important community project to become a reality. Anyone interested in working with the Framingham Planning Department to develop this partnership should contact Bryan Taberner, Senior Planner, at 508-620-4852.

FOS Plans Village-Wide Event for June 9 to Benefit Athenaeum

Plans are in the making for an all-day village event, to be held on June 9, 2001, that will foster community identity, promote Saxonville's businesses and cultural treasures, and raise funds for the Athenaeum restoration. Friends of Saxonville



volunteers will soon be fanning out in our community to enlist your participation. We hope you'll welcome them and contribute your ideas and efforts. Your support and creativity are needed! Our aim is to involve the entire community in an event that will help put Saxonville on the map. We foresee many possibilities for participation and support — event coordination, sponsorship, program advertisements, window signs, self-guided tour, and ways we haven't even thought of!

So ... save the date, look for our volunteers, and "watch this space" for further developments!

Can You Help Solve a Mystery?

Rosemary and Mike Pusillo of Bridgewater are attempting to locate information about their grandparents who lived in Saxonville in the early part of the 1900s.

They have heard that their grandfather Francisco Bellarosa, or Rosa, died in the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 and is buried in a mass grave in Saxonville. Do you know where this mass grave might be?

Also, the Pusillos' grandmother Alexandra owned a bakery in Saxonville during this time. Do you have any information about where this bakery might have been? Was it perhaps in the Bellarosa home?

If you can help, please call 877-1170 or write to the Friends of Saxonville, P.O. Box 3236, Framingham, 01705.

Growing Up in Saxonville: An Oral History

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I was scheduled as a bat boy in a baseball game. Simpson AC vs. Holliston. I was in heaven. These episodes were more important to me than 100% in Spelling! At this date, I do not remember the words I spelt correctly or incorrectly in a test, but I certainly remember the song I sang and when I was the bat boy.

In those days, there was no instrument to measure applause, but I told my mother that the hand clapping was big, big, big! She was happy, too. She asked me to sing "Tenting Tonight" to her after dinner. My brother asked me why I was singing so loud when the song was a "go to sleep" song. I looked at him with disgust. Brothers do not understand what the smaller brother is saying. Sometimes they are jealous. Who knows!

A long, long time ago, at the age of four, and in the year 1905, my mother, my brother, and I moved to Saxonville. My father died in 1902 in Maplewood, Massachusetts, a city or town not very far from Boston. My mother had to find work and someone told her she might get a job in Saxonville.

So my mother and her small family went to Saxonville and she did get a job at the mill in a janitor-type job, and we lived in a company-owned tenement in a row house on Danforth Street. My mother earned five dollars a week and one dollar of that was for the rental.

When I was five years old, I entered school in the first grade. You now have to be six years old to enter the first grade in most schools. I remember my school days in an affectionate manner. My teachers were kind, very caring, and I was happy in school. I can only name three teachers in my school days in Saxonville: Miss Slattery, who had one bad leg and used one crutch, and Miss Brown, and Miss Armsby.

My Saxonville school years were 1906-7-8-9-10 and part of 1911. The school janitor, who was also a truant officer, served in the Civil War, and we thought of him as a big hero. I am certain now that he was properly thought of as a hero by the children.

I somehow connect Miss Slattery with grade one, Miss Brown grade five, and Miss Armsby grade six, but the years may be wrong. But it is not wrong to say I loved them all, as well as my other teachers.

To properly identify myself, I am ninety-five years old now and will be ninety-six on June 4, 1997. But I remember a lot of things in 1906-1911, but I forget today and yesterday.

I fully and soundly believe that I loved my teachers, and the first teachers in my educational process established a pattern that I have tried to follow and, I am happy to say, brought forward some excellent rewards. My mother remarried in 1911 and I transferred to Wendell Phillips School in Boston and graduated grammar school in 1914. I was no longer a Saxonville resident, and I frequently wondered why I never saw Saxonville mentioned in the newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, or by people. Someone with publicity skills is needed to put Saxonville on the map.

One day, not so long ago, in a casual conversation with Mrs. Rose Kessler, a guest resident of a retirement hotel in Los Angeles, [she] said, "My daughter is a school teacher in Saxonville."

"Say it again, Rose, please."

She said "Saxonville" again. What a delightful surprise it was to me. It opened the door to my questions and that is the reason my voice is on the recorder now. Oh boy, am I happy!

ADOPT-A-TRAIL PROGRAM UNDERWAY

Local groups, such as The Framingham Garden Club, The Learning Center For the Deaf, and The Rotary Club have volunteered to help maintain Saxonville's scenic Nature Trail on a one-month-a-year basis. However, additional groups are currently needed to sign up for thus far "unadopted" months. Joining in is so easy, yet so rewarding! To participate in the Adopt-a-Trail Program, the only item you will need is a trash bag. Prepare to reap the benefits of being in a glorious natural setting — so close to your own backyard. Contact Jan Harrington, Coordinator, 24 Paxton Road, Framingham, MA 01701. Phone: (508) 877-0520. This program is open to both groups and individuals.



Architectural Committee Formed, Selects Architect

by Carol Getchell and Todd Boli

The Friends of Saxonville have taken another step to ensure that the Athenaeum is returned to its rightful place in Framingham's future, as well as its past. Todd Boli, Deb Cleveland, Carol Getchell, Jan Harrington, and Tom Sydell joined Chair Denis Black to seek an architect to prepare renovation/repair plans for the grand old hall. Prominent local architect Dick Cote kindly volunteered to join the committee and add his valuable expertise to the project.

The committee sent out a call for candidates and invited three of the respondents to present proposals to the committee. Although the committee was impressed by the thoughtfulness, creativity, and qualifications of all the candidates, on February 6 the members unanimously decided to recommend Bernard Goba to the FOS Board and invite him to work with us in developing our plans for the Athenaeum's continued restoration. Mr. Goba will meet with the committee in the near future to discuss the drafting of a "scope of

work" for the project.

Bernard Goba is head of B. Goba & Associates, P.C., of Medford. His firm has undertaken a number of notable historic restoration and rehabilitation projects throughout New England, including conversion of the historic vacant municipal building in Dorchester into housing for the non-profit Fields Corner Community Development Corp. Mr. Goba is also involved as a board member in the rehabilitation of the Everett Hall Theater in Hyde Park and understands firsthand the challenge of carrying forward an underfunded project for the restoration of an historic community building. We welcome Bernie to the team and look forward to working with him.

As the committee continues to develop plans for how to use the Athenaeum, we eagerly seek ideas and suggestions from all of Saxonville's Friends. We want to know how you would like to see *your* building used. Please contact the committee with your ideas.



Artana Gallery

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Roy is grateful for the reception Saxonville has given Artana. "People are very supportive," she says. "We receive many letters and emails from people who tell us they're glad we're here." She notes that neighboring businesses have extended their hours on the evenings of the gallery's exhibit openings to participate in the excitement of the event. These lively wine and cheese affairs contribute significantly to Saxonville's cultural cachet. Roy is proud that Artana is one of only a few independent exhibition galleries in the Metrowest area, and she thinks of Saxonville as Framingham's up-and-coming artistic center.

Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. or by appointment. For directions and benefit information, call (508) 788-5225 or visit the gallery's Web site at www.artanagallery.com where you can also take a virtual tour of current and past exhibits.

??Queries??

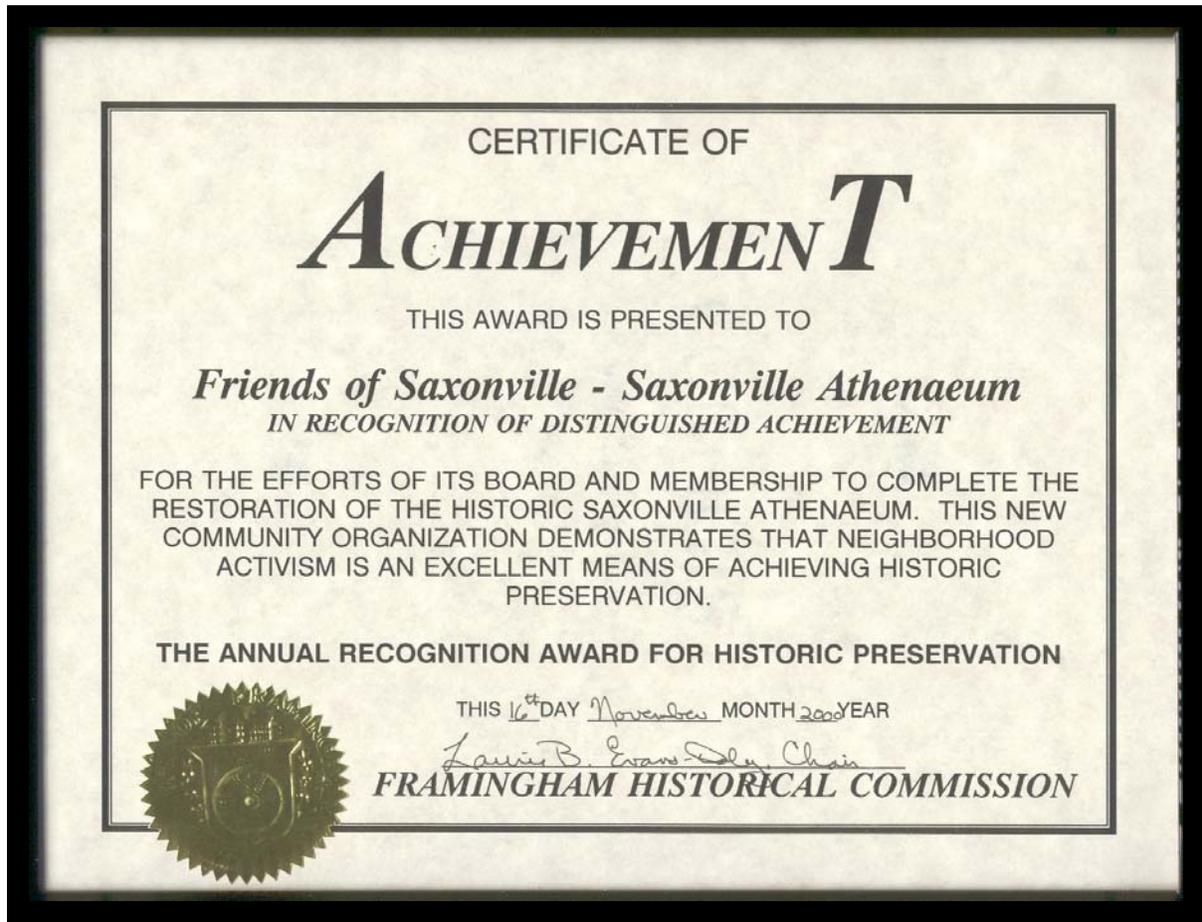
by Carol Getchell

Please help us complete the history of the Athenaeum. We know it was used as a polling place, jail, hospital, school, newspaper press room for "The Saxonville Mirror," and as a place for wedding receptions, religious services, veterans' meetings, plays, lectures, sporting events, dances, etc. We would like to put a date with each of the above, or at least a decade. Can you help?

Also, if you have any photos of events taking place at the hall, would you lend them to the FOS and allow us to make a copy?

We are also looking for information about "The Carpet School" which stood on the site of St. George's parking lot across the street from the church. What we know so far is that in the

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Isn't Our Certificate of Achievement Stunning?

Board members of the Friends of Saxonville were on hand at the November 16 Framingham Selectmen's Meeting to receive the Framingham Historical Commission's Annual Recognition Award for Historic Preservation. Everyone who has supported the ongoing restoration of the Athenaeum should take pride in helping to bring such favorable recognition to our organization. Congratulations, Friends of Saxonville!



Queries



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nineteen forties/fifties it was an abandoned building which the local youths were sure was haunted. We also know that it was a two-story school with one room on each floor.

If you have photos, stories, or information relating to any of these queries, please call 877-1170 or send a message to Friends of Saxonville, P.O. Box 3236, Framingham, 01705-3236.

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 jmaguire@acornworld.net or by mail at Friends of Saxonville Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 3236, Framingham, MA, 01705-3236.