

The BallardVale Gazette

Newsletter of the BallardVale Historic District Commission

Volume 2, Number 2

BallardVale, Massachusetts

July 2002

OLD HOUSE, NEW HOME

The old house, once neglected and sagging, has moved center stage. Saved from a bulldozer almost 40 years ago in Ipswich, Massachusetts, this 18th-century Georgian-style dwelling has itself found a home as a permanent exhibit at the National Museum of American History. The exhibit combines old-fashioned gumshoeing with high-tech probing to reveal the many secrets within the house's walls.

"In my opinion, it's the greatest artifact in the museum," says Lonn Taylor, museum historian and one of the curators of the show. The timber-framed house is also the museum's largest single item, standing two-and-a-half stories tall, with a massive brick chimney that climbs through its floors and towers above the roof.

Inside, ordinary Americans lived nearly 200 years of history.

Its builders were wealthy colonists who wanted the house to reflect their status. A subsequent owner risked everything, including the house, by taking up arms against the British during the American Revolution. One of the residents was an African-American servant, likely a former slave, and later, a family of abolitionists lived there. In the 1870s and '80s, a mill worker and her Irish mother rented space within its walls. The last inhabitants were frugal Yankees, fighting World War II on the home front.

The five families whose stories are told here were not famous, but they remind us that history happens in parlors and kitchens as well as in the halls of Congress. "It should inspire people to realize the connections between themselves and their home lives and something greater," says Shelley Nickles. She and William Yeingst are the other curators of the exhibit. "It will surprise visitors how much history can be found by traveling through time and the lives of people in one house."

Located some 30 miles north of Boston, Ipswich flourished in the 1700s. Among its residents was Abraham Choate, a farmer, miller, merchant and,

finally, a "gentleman." With a wife and growing brood, Choate built this ten-room house with its large windows of expensive, imported glass around 1768. He cut some costs by attaching part of an older dwelling, built about 1710, onto the back. But on the façade and in rooms visitors might see, Choate spent lavishly, ordering ornate woodwork for the front door and crown molding for the parlor, where guests could sip tea in warm, comfortable surroundings.

Residents made do with an outhouse until 1946, when Roy Scott, a returning war veteran, finally put in a toilet, though blocks of ice in an icebox continued to provide the only refrigeration. By 1962, the town government wanted the ground under the run-down house for a parking lot.

At the last minute, as a bulldozer and a backhoe revved their engines, a local group's call to the Smithsonian saved it. Painstakingly dismantled and shipped to Washington in 1963, it became the centerpiece of an exhibition on colonial house-building technology. For most of the past 20 years, however, the skeleton of the house has been out of view behind a wall. A \$2.44 million grant from the National Association of Realtors in 2000 gave it new life.



The Ipswich House was dismantled and moved in 1963.

Although visitors can't wander into the house, they can peer through windows and cutaways at a series of vignettes to get a sense of what it must have been like for 18th-century resident Sarah Choate as she served tea in the dimly lit parlor. In a nearby display, a rare Revolutionary War coat hangs as a reminder of the sacrifices made by later owner Abraham Dodge, a veteran of Bunker Hill. His family had to sell this house after his death in 1786 to satisfy debts. Behind an attic floor was the room where Chance, Dodge's African-American servant, probably lived. Well-to-do social reformers who bought the house in 1822, Josiah and Lucy Caldwell dared to host meetings of the Ipswich Female Anti-Slavery Society and the occasional itinerant lecturer. To raise money for the cause, members worked antislavery messages into items to be sold.

Curators at the Smithsonian enlisted experts to determine when the major oak timbers for this house were cut. By matching the tree rings in pieces of the frame with samples from oaks in New England, scientists were able to peg the age of the house accurately. Examining chips of paint under a microscope, experts learned that Abraham Choate splurged on an expensive pigment, verdigris, to get his front hall to shine a glossy green.



Reconstructed for the exhibit, the house features cutaways of rooms representing various periods of its history, from an 18th-century parlor to a World War II-era kitchen.

But much of the house's story unfolded through plain old detective work with census records, old deed, diaries and maps—all proof of inevitable, if bittersweet, change. "Every time you build something modern in amongst the old, you're losing something," says Richard Lynch, referring to the asphalt parking lot where his house once stood. "And when the old is gone, it's gone forever."

This excerpt of "Old House, New Home", reprinted with permission from author Coco McCabe and photographer Bill Yeingst, originally appeared in its entirety in the June 2002 issue of SMITHSONIAN magazine.

2nd ANNUAL BLOCK PARTY

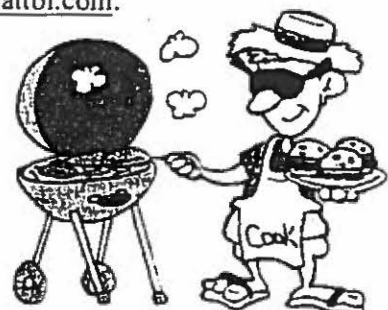
Date: **Saturday, September 7** (Rain date: Sunday, September 8)

Time: **12:00 – 4:00 pm**

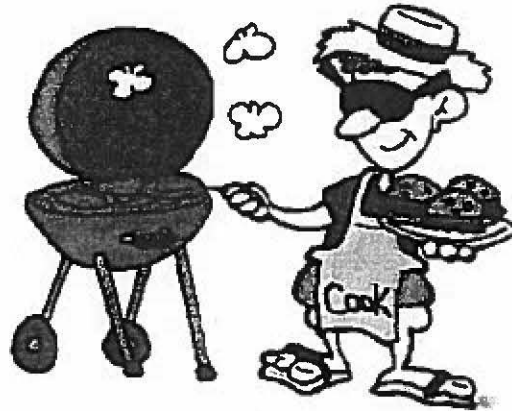
Place: **BallardVale Playground**

Mark your calendars and join your neighbors for an afternoon of food and fun! It's Block Party time again. Come enjoy hamburgers and hotdogs, moon walk and face painting, playground activities and a rockin' DJ! Each family should bring a potluck side dish and a 2-litre bottle of soda or juice to contribute. Grills will be available to people who would prefer to bring items that are not on the party menu. Everyone is welcome to bring lawn chairs, blankets, bikes, balls and other playground toys and activities.

A small number of BallardVale residents planned last year's event that was attended by approximately 200 people. Please help make this year's party a success. To see how you can help (tables, grills, coolers, and labor to set up and clean up is needed) or donate money, call Chris and Diane Huntress at 978-475-7738 or email them at chuntress@attbi.com.



2nd Annual BALLARDVALE BLOCK PARTY!



Date: Saturday, September 7th (Rain Date: Sunday, September 8th)

Time: 12:00 - 4:00 pm

Place: Ballardvale Playground

Mark Your Calendars & Join your neighbors for an afternoon of food and fun!

- Hamburgers & Hotdogs
- Moon Walk & Face painting
- Playground Activities & Rockin' DJ!

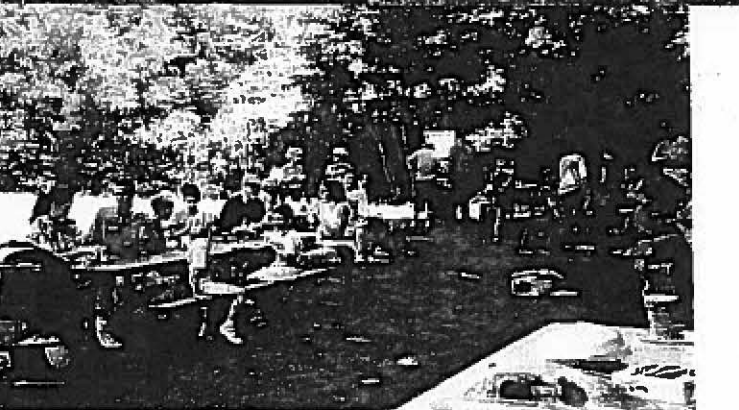
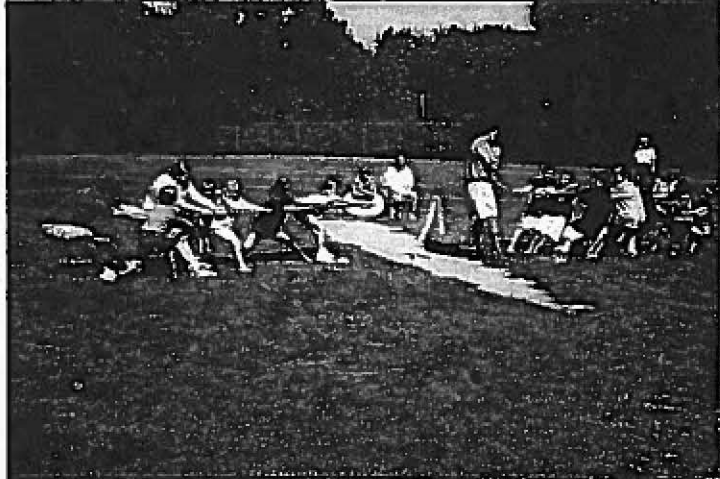
We will be asking families to bring a potluck side dish & 2 liter bottle of soda or juice. Grills will also be available to people who would prefer to bring items that are not on the party menu.

Everyone is welcome to bring lawn chairs, blankets, bikes, balls and other playground toys and activities.

Last year we had about 200 people, however the more feedback we receive the better planning we can do with purchasing the food, paper goods, etc.

We could use some help in planning, if you want to be involved send us an email or give us a call. We look forward to hearing from you.

Chris & Diane Huntress
11 Tewksbury Street
Phone 978.475.7738
chuntress@attbi.com



PRESERVATION AWARDS

May the Andover Preservation Committee awarded its 2002 12th Annual Preservation Awards at a ceremony at Memorial Hall Library. Winners were selected from various areas of Andover from nominations submitted by the community and committee members. An exhibit highlighting the award winners was on display at the library during the month of June. Thanks to the efforts of the following award recipients, the *real* winners will be on display throughout the town of Andover for many years to come!

Mike and Sharon Ristuccia. Award: Certificate of Appreciation for moving the Captain Stephen Abbot House, circa 1825, from 45 BallardVale Road to 373 South Main Street.

Free Christian Church, Elm Street (built in 1907), The Reverend Jack Daniel, Pastor and Architect Domenic Sicari, Associates LTD. Award: Sympathetic Addition.

15 Chestnut Street, circa 1880's, owner Louise Tanner. Award: Adaptive Reuse.

49-1/2 Elm Street, late 19th century, owner Steven Milley. Award: Certificate of Appreciation.

1924 House, Highland Road (built in 1851), owner Philips Academy. Award: Certificate of Appreciation.

David Barrett, Contractor. Award: Certificate of Appreciation for moving Pearson Farmhouse, circa 1850, from 254 South Main Street to 305 South Main Street.

36 Morton Street, circa 1920, owners Mr. and Mrs. John Avery. Award: Certificate of Appreciation.

289 Lowell Street, circa 1850, owners Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Bowler. Award: Certificate of Appreciation.

8-10 Ridge Street, circa 188-89, owner Donald Richmond. Award: Certificate of Appreciation.

111 Highland Road, owners Andrea and Peter Cherneyoff. Award: Landscape Preservation.

8 Highland Road, owners Mr. and Mrs. Robert Reck, Architect Johanna Reck, Chestnut Street Designs. Award: Interior and Exterior Preservation.

FRIENDS OF THE BALLARDVALE GREEN

For many years, Lucy and Richard Bowen of Bannister Road have been quietly caring for BallardVale Green. Their seasonal ministrations include edging the grass, pulling weeds, planting summer flowers, tending shrubs, raking leaves and decorating the tree with holiday lights. Now you can join the Bowens by joining "Friends of the BallardVale Green". Two or three times a year, the Friends will meet to plant, weed or do whatever odd job is necessary to maintain the Green as the beautiful centerpiece of BallardVale.

Be a Friend! Call Richard Bowen at 978-475-6986 for information on how you can participate.

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION MEMBERS

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SWAP SHOP

Available: large pieces of old wavy glass, rescued from trash, good for replacement panes. Call Diane Derby at 978-475-0125.

Available: 11 wooden shutters @ 59" x 20" and 2 wooden shutters @ 55" x 20". Call Bruce Taylor at 978-475-1615.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Thank you to the attentive reader who alerted us to our misspelling of the Bradlee School - we incorrectly spelled it "Bradley"- in the March issue of the Gazette. Look for an article about Josiah Putnam Bradlee and his contributions to BallardVale in an upcoming issue of the Gazette. Questions and comments are always welcome!

CALENDAR

- Aug. 7 (Wednesday)** BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting
Town Offices – 2nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM
- Sept. 4 (Wednesday)** BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting
Town Offices – 2nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM
- Sept. 7 (Saturday)** BallardVale Block Party, BallardVale Playground - 12:00 – 4:00PM
- Sept. 8 (Sunday)** Rain date for block party!
- Oct. 2 (Wednesday)** BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting
Town Offices – 2nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM

BallardVale Historic District Commission

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Andover, MA 01810*

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See you at the block party on September 7!