

THE SALEM ATHENÆUM

337 Essex Street, Salem, MA 01970
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Email: Info@salemathenaeum.net
Web Site: www.salemathenaeum.net
DIRECTOR: Jean Marie Prociou

LIBRARY HOURS:

Tues. / Wed. / Fri: 1 PM to 5 PM
Thursday: 5 PM to 9 PM
Saturday: 10 AM to 2 PM

Salem Athenæum Newsletter

Spring 2009

FOUNDED AS THE SOCIAL LIBRARY IN 1760

IMPORTANT DATES

Spring Exhibiton Opening
April 22 - 7 - 9:00 p.m.

Spring Garden Clean-Up
April 25 - 9:00 a.m. to noon.

Lectures

May 1, Sargent and Boston: Love at First (and Second!) Sight. Lecture by Mary Crawford-Volk, Firday at 7:30 p.m., with reception at 7:00 p.m. \$20, \$15 for members.

Annual Meeting

May 6, 7:00 p.m. All proprietors and subscribers welcome.

Library closed Saturday, May 23 for Memorial Day Weekend.

Annual Garden Party

Sunday, June 7, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

The Summer Salon series

will continue each Friday at 5:00 p.m. during July and August. Each week does not yet have a speaker or topic, but we encourage you to check the Web site, call the Athenæum, or just show up.

American Medical Botany

July 3, 5:00 p.m. Lecture by Honorary Curator, Dr. Dale Gephart

Rebel Shakespeare Company

July 17, 5:00 p.m. Performance of Hamlet

Todd DePastino

July 24, 5:00 p.m. Illustrated talk on the great World War II cartoonist **Bill Mauldin**, an army infantry sergeant who rocketed to fame at age twenty-two with his wildly popular feature "Up Front."

Rebel Shakespeare Company

Twelfth Night, Aug. 28, 5:00 p.m.

Annual Meeting Preview



As we prepare for the Athenæum's **Annual Meeting on May 6, 7 pm**, we wanted to provide you, our members and proprietors, with a snapshot of what we'll be covering during the evening. It is important to us that you add your voice to the evening's business, and we hope you will plan to attend. This year, perhaps more than other years, is filled with special challenges for which we need your input, views, and support.

Finances

With no surprise to most of our members, the present economy has had a significant impact on the Athenæum's endowment. We are as affected by the financial downturn as any other nonprofit, though the library is in a particularly vulnerable position since it depends almost entirely

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Buildings & Grounds

Highlights of Past Fiscal Year

- Installed new lighting fixtures in Main Reading Room, replacing fixtures at least 60 years old.
- Grounds improvements continued with opening the space around the building.
- Landscaped in front of the building to make more inviting and solve drainage problems.
- Transplanted shrubs on west side of main entrance. Planted ground cover.
- Trimmed major branches from trees on the west front of building, to prevent damage to building and maintain trees.
- Trimmed major branches from lower end of maple trees on south edge of property in back of building.
- Continued pruning and treating dogwoods on property and reseeding of lawn.
- Established plantings along fence near Essex Street.
- Repaired the rubber roof to stop leaking, re-plastering and painting as necessary to repair the existing damage.

Going Forward

- Will install radiator covers for safety and appearance.
- Will replace banister section South Portico.

Own a Piece of Athenæum History



Now that new lighting fixtures have been added to the Main Reading Room of the Athenæum, the old fixtures are looking for a new home. The fixtures were state of the art during the most productive period of American design, the 1930's, and were replaced simply because we needed more direct light to conduct our programs.

The fixtures are probably bronze. The inside is completely mirrored to reflect light upwards. During the recent past, the fixtures each had one 200-watt bulb. They are 12 inches in diameter, and hang 36 inches from the ceiling. There are three fixtures, being sold separately.

Minimum bids of \$150 each are asked. Please telephone, or e-mail your bids to Jean-Marie Procius at the Athenæum. Winning bids will be announced at the annual meeting in May.

Writers

Do you have an interest in a work of literature or a particular author that you would like to share with your fellow Athenæum members in a future newsletter? Please let us know. Submissions should be kept to 300 words or less. Inclusion in the newsletter would be subject to space availability.

Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting continued from Page 1

on membership dues and an annual percentage of the endowment for its operations. In the present era of cutbacks and reductions, the Athenæum must now downsize its own budget in order to remain stable. We have carefully studied where our budget adjustments will be made, and will be discussing these with you on May 6.

Key among our meeting topics will be Athenæum finances. Like many other smaller nonprofits, the Athenæum's endowment has shrunk, ours by 34 percent, since a year ago, which means we must reduce the amount of money we can safely withdraw from the endowment and use to defray our expenses. Naturally, there are recurring fixed expenses that cannot be adjusted: insurance, utilities (water, electricity, heat), the cost of routine maintenance, and the Athenæum director's salary. It is a modest collection of expenses when compared to other institutions! Still, it leaves extremely tight funding for those items that make our library so unique: our marvelous programs, lectures, and concerts; our superb special exhibitions; cataloguing and enhancements to our collections; and general building maintenance.

These are among our challenges in the coming year, and your help and support will be most welcome.

Collections

Collections are at the very center of the Athenæum. The Collections portion of the budget reflects both income (book sales) and expenses. Nearly 75 percent of the Collections expenses go toward the

acquisition of new books and subscriptions to periodicals. The remaining funding supports care of the circulating collections and our educational mission through exhibitions. Basic collections care includes record-keeping materials, organization and storage supplies, and repair of worn circulating books. Exhibition expenses include supplies, copies and enlargements, advertising, and related programming.

For the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the Collections budget has been cut 10 percent, in line with overall fiscal pruning across all budgetary categories. Our intention is to keep the acquisitions portion of the budget intact so that we may continue to supply new reading materials at the current levels for our members to enjoy. Reducing spending on supplies will slow the progress of some of our on-going and planned projects, but we hope to restore funding in the near future.

Building and Grounds

The good news here is that we've been able to make some significant physical improvements to the building, including brand new suspended lighting in the main reading room (Did you notice? Look up! The brown 60-year-old fixtures are now gone.). There have been many improvements in the grounds: we've landscaped the front of the building to make it more attractive and to solve some drainage problems. We've transplanted shrubbery on the west side of the main entrance and planted ground cover. And we trimmed major branches from trees to preserve them and to

prevent damage to the building. And we've established new plantings along the fence on Essex Street. (The founders would be proud!)

We've made repairs to the rubber roof to stop leaking, re-plastered and painted where necessary. We intend to install radiator covers for safety and a better appearance, and will replace the banister section at the south entrance to the library.

One challenge we now face is that we may have to make interior improvements to the building to bring us into compliance with Salem fire and safety regulations. The details of this are now being discussed.

Volunteers

We continue to be blessed with a sizeable number of dedicated volunteers who support the library (several of whom come in at least one afternoon EVERY week) and many who assist with every program and function, supported by a dedicated team of Trustees. (Countless hours are spent planning and running our programs – hours given freely by these good people, many of whom have their own full-time responsibilities elsewhere. The Athenæum is truly fortunate in this way.)

There is indeed a lot to be thankful for, and a lot to look forward to at the Athenæum. With your support – AND your presence at the upcoming meeting on May 6 – we will make a secure future for this most beloved of Salem institutions. □

With thanks for input from Trustees Maura Henry, Francie King, Richard Jendrysik, Dana Jordan, Sue Schopf and Director Jean Marie Prociuous

Lyceum Lecturers



An organization from Salem's past, which attracted a large following, was the Salem Lyceum, formed in 1830. For more than fifty years the Lyceum conducted a series of lectures on the widest variety of subjects.

The list of lectures, both general and technical, in the first fifty years, (1830-1879), is indeed impressive; so too is the list of lecturers: John Quincy Adams, Horace Mann, Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, Edward Everett Hale, (nephew of Edward Everett) Rufus Choate, Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Bancroft, Samuel Gridley Howe, Robert C. Winthrop, Theodore Parker, Wendell Phillips, Jared Sparks, Mark Hopkins, John S. Dwight, Charles Sumner, Asa Gray, Louis Agassiz, John B. Gough, Bayard Taylor, Henry Ward Beecher, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and James Russell Lowell.

There were about twenty lectures each winter. At first the speakers were mostly residents of Salem, but as years went on noted men from outside became predominant. Ralph Waldo Emerson was their most frequent lecturer, giving thirty-three lectures in the course of the thirty-six years from 1835 to 1871. Other frequent lecturers of wide repute were: Wendell Phillips (16), Theodore Parker (12), Louis Agassiz (10), Henry Ward Beecher (8), Oliver Wendell Holmes (7), and Horace Mann (7). John Quincy Adams and Daniel Webster each came to Salem twice to address the Lyceum.

At first the Lyceum held its lectures in churches, in the Methodist meeting-house on Sewall Street, and in the Universalist meeting-house. This, however, was merely an expedient, for within a year of its inception the association had erected a building for its own special purpose, a wooden building on Church street a few doors from Washington street, having an auditorium in the form of an ancient Roman theatre. The hall was first used January 20, 1831. □



Read More about It

As our current economic crisis continues to unfold, some of us may wish to read more about prior difficulties in hopes of gaining insight and understanding into our present condition. Of course, some others may understandably wish to avoid such topics all together and wait it out! For those who want to venture into the morass, I suggest taking the long view and digging into the historical past. By doing so, we are often able to see both what is particular and distinct about today's economic and financial problems as well as what elements link the present with the past. Here are a few books that may be of interest:

In his new book *The Ascent of Money*, Niall Ferguson argues that finance is the foundation of human progress. Further, Ferguson posits that finance provides the vital and necessary back story to all of History. This is a book with ambition. While he sounds a remarkably positive note about the world of money, the book also offers a cautionary tale: every bubble must burst. The question then is, what lessons can be (but are not always) learned?

Anne Goldgar's *Tulipmania* examines the tulip craze that swept over the Dutch in the years 1636-1637. Rather than looking at this spectacular event through the lens of macroeconomics, Goldgar examines the craze through the lens of culture and offers rich insights into the sociological and microcosmic elements of this fabled bubble.

In the early eighteenth century, all of Britain (from the King down to the middling sorts) seemed to be mad to invest in the South Seas Company. The only problem was that the South Seas Company had no real business, and no one bothered to ask how promised great rewards would actually be achieved. For more on this incredible fraud, try Malcolm Balen, *The Secret History of the South Sea Bubble*.

John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Great Crash of 1929* is well worth a rereading for Galbraith's insights and rigorous analysis of the Black Tuesday and what led up to that fateful day. Reading this book may well spur a reader to tackle more of Galbraith's economic histories and theoretical works.

Ponzi's Scheme: The True Story of a Financial Legend by Mitchell Zuckoff chronicles the stunning fraud committed by the charming Ponzi in the 1920s. In this fast-paced narrative we learn about Ponzi's talents, the hopeful investors who sought easy money and asked no questions, and the coining of the phrase that characterizes the schemes of Ponzi's even more brazen successors, such as Madoff and Stanford.

Edward Chancellor, in *Devil Take the Hindmost: A History of Financial Speculation*, surveys the long and tragic history of bubbles, manias, and the widespread delusion that surrounds them. This is a fast read that offers a broad overview. □ —Maura Henry, Trustee

From the Stacks

Did You Know this about Voltaire?



Book-lovers have spent countless joyful hours browsing in the Salem Athenæum stacks. As with most of life's joys, being present in the moment and noticing what's in front of you will yield the most surprising and pleasing results.

Elaine von Bruns had been spending long hours in the Holyoke Room preparing exhibitions when she happened to notice a large, yet incomplete set of the works of Voltaire. François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778), the French writer, satirist and philosopher, was the embodiment of the 18th century Enlightenment. His works were some of the most-read at the 19th century Salem Athenæum.

We soon discovered that these particular volumes had an interesting story. Volume 69 contained the following note:

“Voltaire brought in two different ships from France by Ernestus Plummer one of these being lost at sea the following volumes are wanting
vol 1 5 6 8 9 12 14 15 17 19 23 24 31
37 41 48 58 59 67

Ernestus Augustus Plummer was an early Proprietor of the Athenæum who earned a fortune in the Russian trade. His reading was extensive, ranging from Cicero to contemporary fiction. When Ernestus Augustus died, his sister, Caroline, fulfilled his wish that the Salem Athenæum have a building of its own. With the help of her \$30,000 bequest, the Athenæum built the first Plummer Hall, which was its home for fifty years, from 1857 to 1907. Its sale funded the construction of our current library. The Voltaire volumes, some of which were lost at sea like the younger brothers of the Plummer family, now offer enlightenment from the Salem Athenæum's second Plummer Hall.

The volumes that survived the voyage from France to Salem, and on to the 21th century, are currently on display on the second floor landing. □

SPRING CLEANING, AGAIN

Spring has finally arrived in Salem. The spring clean-up is set for Saturday, April 25, from 9:00 AM to Noon. This year we will clear away the accumulated grime of winter, trim back the overgrowth of last year, and ready our gardens for the coming warm weather, the Garden Party and our Summer Salons. Our long-range program for the grounds is coming to fruition, and we do not need any heavy pruning or transplanting.

Simple weeding and light pruning will be the order of the day. Plan on bringing your own gloves and hand tools. The Athenæum will provide the rakes, bags, beverages and snacks. □



Celtic Concert

The Athenæum played host to a Celtic Concert on St. Patrick's Day, March 17. Those in attendance were treated to a varied and entertaining mix of music from Ireland, Scotland, Cape Breton and the USA. Musicians were David O'Docherty, piper from Ireland originally, but now Lynn; Michael O'Leary, from Gloucester, who sang and played the Irish drum; and from Salem, Jen and Bob Strom, who played fiddle and guitar. Photographer Ziggy Hartfelder displayed photos of Ireland.

Contributions to the Athenæum

The support of members who give beyond the basic subscription is one of the great strengths of the Salem Athenæum. Donations represent an increasing level of support for the annual operating budget and also fund special opportunities that arise during the year. A list of members and friends who have demonstrated their generosity from April 1, 2008 through March 31, 2009 follows:

Laureate (\$1000 and up)

Mr. Blake and Mrs. Nina Anderson
 Dr. Maura Henry
 Mr. Dana P. Jordan
 Dr. Sue Weaver Schopf
 Mr. Matthew Whitlock and Ms. Penelope Neal

Patron (\$500 – 999)

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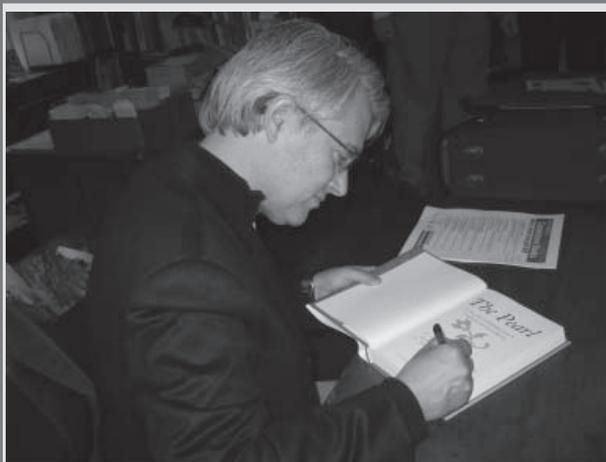
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Memorial and Honorary Gifts

In memory of Ed Stevenson
 Mr. and Mrs. Donald Clarke
 In memory of Julia Bates
 Ms. Katherine B. Howe
 In honor of Leary Family Scholars: Alex, Sarah, Casey and Elizabeth
 Mrs. Mary Leary
 In memory of Katherine Hoskins
 Ms. Camilla Lockwood
 In memory of Ann Mayers
 Ms. Donna Mayers
 In honor of Sue Schopf
 Mr. Peter and Mrs. Elizabeth Merry

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In case you missed it



In March, award-winning historian and translator, **Douglas Smith**, discussed his book *The Pearl: A True Tale of Forbidden Love in Catherine the Great's Russia*. Smith is currently resident scholar at the University of Washington's Henry M. Jackson School of International Affairs.

In January, **Linda Jenkins** discussed her new book *Travels with My Husband: On the Road with Tim for Better or for Worse*.

Tim is a former trustee of the Athenæum.



In February, in a co-sponsored lecture with Historic Salem, Inc. Historian **Donald Friary**, with **Margherita Desy**, spoke on the Great Salem Fire of 1914.

Contributions to the Athenæum cont'd from page 6

In Kind Donations

Ms. Jacquelyn Frederiksen - *The Magazine Antiques and Consumer Reports*
 Ms. Lynn L. Frothingham and Mr. David O. Decker
 Supplies for Storybook Journeys Exhibition
 Mr. Carlton and Mrs. Nancy Lutts
 Live music at Garden Party
 Mrs. Julie Shaw Lutts
 Artwork design for exhibitions, Adams Lecture and Egg Hunt
 Mr. Peter Merry - Candy and set-up for egg hunt
 Mr. Richard and Mrs. Diane Pabich
 Accommodations at the Salem Inn for Adams Lecturer, James R. Gaines
 Peabody Essex Museum
 Loan of paintings and exhibition cases
 Mrs. Ann Shaw
 Nana's Kitchen baked goods for Egg Hunt
 Mrs. Elaine von Bruns
 Supplies for Under the Covers Exhibitions
 Mrs. Winifred Wilkens
 Gift certificate to Brattle Bookshop

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Library Volunteers:

Jim Austin - Collections Committee
Marla Gearhart
Jane Mosakowski
Nancy TenBroeck
Elaine von Bruns - Collections Committee
Winifred Wilkens - Collections Committee



Welcome to the following new members:

New members through April 8, 2009

Jane Balderidge
Karen Battles and James Shanley
Amy R. Bruce
Regina Flynn and Family
Valerie Kanaley and Steve Fox
Carol Wilkinson

New proprietors

Mary Simpson and Wayne Sousa
Mary Whitney and Nick Nowak

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Mrs. Hope Griffin
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