

THE SALEM ATHENÆUM

337 Essex Street, Salem, MA 01970
(978) 744-2540 - Fax (978) 744-7536
Email: Info@salematherenaeum.net
Web Site: www.salematherenaeum.net
DIRECTOR: Jean Marie Procius

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

Summer 2009

FOUNDED AS THE SOCIAL LIBRARY IN 1760



IMPORTANT DATES

The Athenæum will be closed the first two weeks in August.

Rebel Shakespeare Company
Twelfth Night, Aug. 28, 5:00 p.m.

Salons

August 21: Carlotta Tyler will speak on her trip to South Africa and the issues of apartheid

Lectures

September 15: **The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane.** Lecture by author Katherine Howe. Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. \$10. \$5 for members Free for students.

Courses

Fall: **Charles Darwin and His Legacy.** Conducted by Dr. James Morris, Assistant Professor of Biology at Brandeis Univ. and Research Advisor in Harvard's Div. of Continuing Education. Sept. 17 - Oct. 22 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. \$175 for members; \$195 for non-members.

Spring 2010: **William Bentley's Salem.** Conducted by Dr. Donald Friary. April 5 through May 10 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. \$175 for members; \$195 for non-members.

Celebration

September 19: Join us in a city-wide celebration of the Sophia Peabody Hawthorne Bicentennial. The Salem Athenæum will host a special program for children at 11:00 a.m. featuring a story about Sophia and an art project celebrating her life as an artist.

Look for details about more events soon.

Please Note

The Athenæum will close August 1 and reopen on August 18.



ATHENÆUM ONLINE!

Twenty-first century technology is at the heart of two recent developments at the Athenæum.

First is the Athenæum's first-ever online exhibition, a digitized version of honorary curator Elaine von Bruns' **Under the Covers: The Hidden Art of Endpapers.** The physical exhibition ran from December 2008 to March 2009, and an interactive web-based version is now on permanent display at <http://www.salematherenaeum.net/endpapers>.

The Athenæum has also just launched its first-ever online catalog. We have partnered with **Library Thing**, an on-line, open-source (meaning that the technology is maintained by an interested community, for free) library catalog run by a group of web developers and librarians who have harnessed the power of the internet to bring like-minded readers together.

Three Athenæum volunteers have added almost 500 titles to the online catalog so far, starting with the most recent acquisitions – at this point, all of 2009's titles are available for searching online.

Visit the Athenæum catalog page at <http://www.librarything.com/home/SalemAthenaeum> and open your own (free) Library Thing account. There, you will find user reviews, a very powerful recommended-reading engine, and a

community of nearly a million book-lovers, publishers, libraries, and institutions that are constantly adding information about the millions of books in their database.



The Athenæum catalog is available to anyone with an internet connection, but by opening a Library Thing account, you get the ability to upload the titles in your own personal library, track the books you've read and books you'd like to read in the Athenæum's (or anyone else's) collection, post reviews of books, request early-reviewer copies of new titles, find out about book-related events at the Athenæum and other regional venues, chat about books and reading, and more.

When you find a book in the Athenæum's online catalog that you'd like to read, contact Jean Marie Procius for current availability and to reserve your copy for check-out.

Continued on page 5

Did you miss any of these events?



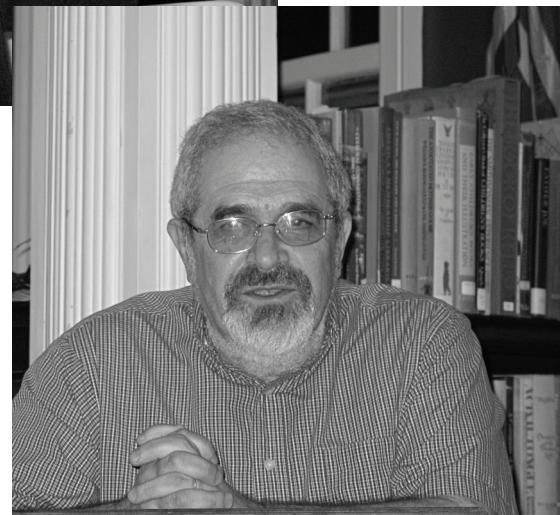
Frazier Jones as Hamlet and Henry Lutts as Gravedigger in the Rebel Shakespeare production of Hamlet.



Dr. Andrew DelBanco-Adams Lecture speaker
Topic: Our Melville



Annual Meeting



Dr. Morris Rossabi
Silk Road Lecturer



The
Clambake 5
playing
Dixieland at
the spring
Garden
Party
←



Garden Party

Buildings & Grounds

FLOOR REFINISHING PLANNED FOR AUGUST

From August 1 through August 17 the Athenaeum will be closed for resurfacing of the floors in the main reading room. The maple floor is original to the building and was last resurfaced eleven years ago. The work will include sanding down to the clear wood and refinishing with multiple coats of polyurethane finish.

The result will be a brighter floor surface which will enhance the impact of the new lighting fixtures installed last fall. The brighter finish will restore the appearance envisioned by the architect, William Rantoul. The polyurethane floor will be less apt to show minor scratches and wear, and will be easier to maintain.

To accomplish the work, the main reading room will be cleared of furniture and office equipment, books will be covered, and paintings and sculpture removed. Removal and protection of Athenaeum books will be handled by our own volunteers. For economy, professional services will be engaged only for the specialized work of refinishing.

During the past year, the overhead lighting fixtures have been replaced, side sconce lights restored to service, and new white seating acquired. The lighter floor finish is part of a continuing program to provide a welcoming space in the Athenaeum for members and guests.

ONGOING BUILDING MAINTENANCE

One of the railings on the outdoor back stairway had significant rot and insect damage and is in process of being rebuilt. The railing was showing external signs of deterioration and instability. When opened for repair, evidence of carpenter ants was visible in the wood.

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President's Letter



Summer in New England. What could be finer, rain notwithstanding? It's traditionally the time when we begin planning for the coming year at the Athenaeum – our programs and events and exhibitions. And for this coming year, 2010, there will be a special patina over all we do: it's the Athenaeum's Bicentennial birthday year! Our splendid library turns 200 years old, and we mean to blow the trumpets and sound the bells, starting with a **Bicentennial Celebration gala** on March 13, 2010, in Hamilton Hall (mark your calendars, hunt up some 19th century finery, and look for details later this fall).

Our programming will celebrate distinguished figures from our past and superb speakers from the present. Our courses will continue to offer opportunities for enrichment, starting with this year's 200th commemoration of Charles Darwin's birth during this fall's six-session course, "**Darwin and On the Origin of Species**," with Dr. James Morris, September 17 through October 22. Our language clubs – in German, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese – will swing back into action, and our programming is shaping up to be the best yet. (I'll let our Education Committee chair deliver the good news there. Check our web site for calendar details: www.salemathenaeum.net)

This coming year, we'll be focusing on creating greater visibility for the Athenaeum and all that it offers our community. Though New England is rife with historic institutions, few can boast the kind of colorful beginnings, historic trajectory, and cultural currency that ours has. The Salem Athenaeum is one of only 16 historic membership libraries remaining in the country – there once were hundreds. And while we have endured for two centuries, there are still many citizens in Salem and environs who don't know us – don't know what a repository of history we are, or how much we've evolved into one of Salem's historical/cultural gems. So this coming year will be one of celebration and outreach. And you, our subscribers and proprietors, are our very best ambassadors! You've enjoyed Athenaeum programs and courses, parties and exhibits. Help us spread the word, and let others know that our doors are wide open to all, to come in and enjoy our building, its literary treasures, and its gardens.

And now, enjoy this issue of the newsletter, and remember that we welcome your submissions of short articles on literary topics of your choice and your suggestions for how we can improve our content.

I wish you and your family the best of the rest of summer, and I'll look forward to seeing you at the Library often! —*Francie King*

*President,
Board of Trustees*

Two New Courses for the Coming Season

CHARLES DARWIN and WILLIAM BENTLEY TO BE FEATURED in TWO NEW ATHENÆUM COURSES

The Salem Athenæum is pleased to announce that it will offer two courses in coming months that will feature historic figures Charles Darwin and Salem's own Reverend William Bentley. Darwin and his *On the Origin of Species* will be featured this September and October, and Bentley's life and times will be the focus of a spring course in April 2010.

Darwin and *On the Origin of Species*

It's been said that James Joyce's *Ulysses* is "the greatest novel no one has ever read." Well, the same can be said of another groundbreaking work, which will be the focus of the Athenæum's fall 2009 course. The year 2009 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. We will celebrate these occasions by considering Darwin and his legacy this fall, starting September 17 and continuing for six consecutive Thursday evenings through October 22, from 7 to 9 p.m. each evening. Tuition will be \$175 for Athenæum members and \$195 for non-members.

The course will be led by the brilliant and affable Dr. James Morris, Assistant Professor of Biology at Brandeis University and Research Advisor in the Biological Sciences in the Master of Liberal Arts Program in Harvard's Division of Continuing Education.

For centuries prior to the *Origin's* publication, science had been considered a branch of "natural theology." To be acceptable, scientific theory had to be consistent with the teachings of the Church of England. In the 17th century, Archbishop Ussher had derived a

chronology of the history of the world, beginning with the creation, based on a literal reading of the Bible. By this reasoning, he concluded that the world was created on 23 October, 4004 BC. The great Isaac Newton reached a similar conclusion. The Biblical account of the Creation in the Book of Genesis was thus regarded by most as entirely factual. The cosmos, all things terrestrial—including plants, creatures of land and sea—were assumed to be created whole and perfect, in the condition in which the Creator intended them to exist. Man was created in the image of God, and woman from the rib of man. They walked upright and were beautiful, articulate, and possessed of a highly developed sense of reason. It was with this world-view that the new sciences of geology and evolutionary biology would



Dr. James Morris

clash. The idea that the earth could be many millions of years old, and that forms of life may have evolved from lower to higher forms, based on natural selection, was, for many, almost impossible to grasp.

The publication of the *Origin* completely transformed Western society, providing a new paradigm that ranks in its far-reaching effects with those of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton. Although Darwin's work is often cited, frequently celebrated, and

Courses continued on page 6

A gripping supernatural puzzler... spellbinding
Matthew Pearl, author of *The Poe Shadow* and *The Dante Club*

The Physick Book of DELIVERANCE DANE
KATHERINE HOWE

The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane

The Athenæum's fall program season kicks off on Tuesday, September 15th, with **Katherine Howe**, author of this summer's hot read, *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane*. Scholars of the Salem witch trials have long asked why the accusers chose to ruin so many lives, but Howe asks, what if the women really were witches? What if the magic was real? In the novel, Harvard graduate student Connie Goodwin finds the name "Deliverance Dane" on a scrap of paper inside an old Bible. This discovery launches Connie on a quest to find out who this woman was, a journey that becomes even more compelling when she begins to have visions of a woman condemned for practicing "physick"—herbal healing—on her neighbors in 1690's Salem. When Connie's boyfriend, Sam, has a horrifying accident, she realizes the only way to save him involves an ancient and mystical **Continued on page 6**

Buildings/Grounds cont'd from p. 3

The top railing will be replaced, and sub-rail as necessary. The balustrades appear sound and will be retained. The box post at the base will be replaced. Carpentry work is in progress, and painting will match the classic white of the back porch.

The sash cords and broken window panes in the Main Reading Room and in the Wendt Room have been repaired. The lower sashes in the room are the only ones in operation. The upper sashes were blocked in place many years ago.

UPCOMING BUILDING REPAIRS

The brick sidewalk in front of the building on Essex Street will be relaid to eliminate the puddling of snowmelt in the winter. Bricks will be taken up, a sloped sub-surface installed, and the existing bricks replaced. At the same time, the bricks in the rear wall of the building will be repointed to seal against moisture. Repointing will be limited to areas showing visible signs of moisture penetration.

Interior painting to repair water damage inside the building will follow.

GROUNDS

Unexpected discoveries are always being made at the Athenaeum, including in the grounds. A hitherto unknown azalea bush, and a Kousa dogwood tree have been discovered on the eastern border of the grounds. The plants were discovered during some routine weeding, and are reasonably mature.

Both the dogwood tree and azalea bush were hidden beneath a thick growth of lilac bushes along the eastern edge of the property. Arrangements are being made for professional pruning to scale back the lilacs and allow the other plants to expand.

The kousa dogwood is the first on the Athenaeum grounds. Sadly, our other dogwoods are susceptible to blight, and will someday be gone. In the long run, our grounds will be dominated by kousa dogwoods.

Pruning will be done on the rhododendron bushes along the south path in the back of the building. At the same time as the lilacs are done, the rhodies will be topped off and thinned, allowing for interior development of the plants in a healthier environment.

FALL PLANTING AND PRUNING (Donations Solicited.)

Watch for the date in late September when we will be clearing the grounds and tidying up for the winter. Special attention will be given to the border plantings surrounding the back yard.

To maintain the border, we are asking for donation of hasta splits from any of our members who can share their mature plants. The hasta provide a classic New England look to the grounds, are hardy, and easy to maintain. Any one wishing to donate may notify Jean Marie Procious and drop off the plants in the back of the building .

UPCOMING GARDEN REPAIRS

Plans are under way to repair the back gate to provide easy access to the grounds, and provide a permanent sign on the gate, as worded below.

The Salem Athenaeum

The Salem Athenaeum maintains a building and garden to provide a venue for literary and cultural pursuits to benefit members of the Athenaeum, and the North Shore Community at large.

The grounds are open to the public during daylight hours for passive enjoyment.

The signage is in keeping with the revised building use policy currently being developed by the trustees.

BUILDING USAGE POLICY

A revised building usage policy is currently being circulated among the trustees prior to implementation. Generally, the policy will codify current

practices, provide a standard set of rules for the building and grounds, and insure compliance with regulatory and insurance requirements.

During the past 100 years, our mission has remained unchanged, but regulatory requirements have not. The success of our programs has begun to test the legal and practical limits of our capacity. The new policy will set limits in accordance with current fire codes. Additionally, the City of Salem has recently amended requirements for serving alcoholic beverages at public functions. The revised policy will address the new requirements.

—Richard Jendrysik

Online continued from page 1

With special thanks to Carolyn MacGuire, Donna Albino, and Jen Meger for their enthusiasm and dedication to this project.

More Collections News

It's time to make room on those crowded book shelves. The annual book sale will be on Saturday, October 3rd. Please drop off donations during regular Athenaeum hours through October 2nd.

In addition to the programs and parties in honor of next year's Bicentennial, we are also planning a special slate of exhibitions. Next summer we will celebrate the talents within our community with a Members' Art Show. We invite everyone from professionals to hobbyists to help us fill the library with paintings, photographs, sculpture, mixed media, crafts, and more. Look for more details in upcoming newsletters.

American Medical Botany: A Salem Athenaeum Treasure will be on display through mid-September. Don't miss the chance to visit this beautiful and very informative exhibition by honorary curator, Dale Gephart.

—Jean Marie Procious

Courses continued from page 4

still occasionally maligned, it is seldom read. This course is an invitation to read the Origin in its entirety. Each chapter provides lessons not only in evolution and natural selection, but also Darwin's life, Victorian times, philosophy, geology, embryology, biogeography, and the history of life on Earth. The course will end by considering the impact of Darwin in his own times, and ask why the Origin remains controversial to this day—particularly among the proponents of "Intelligent Design."

Dr Morris earned an A.B. degree in History and Science from Harvard College, where he was elected a Junior Fellow of the Society of Fellows. He subsequently earned his Ph.D. in Genetics from Harvard and an M.D. from Harvard Medical School. Dr. Morris has broad interests in science education, medicine, biotechnology, and the history of science, and teaches courses on evolutionary biology and Darwin, and on genetics and genomics. At the Museum of Science in Boston, he often gives talks to the public on current developments in science and technology. A recipient of numerous teaching awards and fellowships, and a member of several science boards, he is currently working as part of a team on an introductory college-level biology textbook.

William Bentley's Salem

The second of the Athenaeum's course offerings will be part of our 2010 Bicentennial Celebration in 2010, and will focus on one of Salem's most illustrious citizens, Reverend William Bentley. Almost everyone living in Salem knows something about Bentley, but few of us know the details of his extraordinary life and the extent of his influence both within and outside New England. This course will fill in some of these details, and promises to give a picture of Salem's extraordinary economic growth at the same time.

The course, William Bentley's Salem, will run Monday evenings, April 5 through May 10, 7 to 9 p.m., at the Athenaeum. Tuition will again be \$175 for members and \$195 for non-members. Its instructor will be Dr. Donald Friary.

For thirty-six years, from 1783 to 1810, Bentley was pastor of the East Church in

Salem, and chronicler in his voluminous diary of the port town's daily events. These were the years of Salem's meteoric economic growth, the period when the China Trade put Salem on the world's map, the era when the town developed into an elegant metropolis ... and the time when the Salem Athenaeum was founded. In a series of six classes, Dr. Friary will discuss the eccentric minister who rarely traveled further than Boston and Cambridge but was a citizen and an observer of the world.



Dr. Donald
Friary

Dr. Friary will explore Bentley's childhood in Boston, as well as his education at the Boston Latin School and Harvard College. It will follow his search for a post as pastor of one of New England's churches and his adoption of the liberal theology that in his lifetime became Unitarianism. Course participants will hear about Bentley's parishioners, grand and obscure; Salem's harbor front; and Bentley's commitment to his own intellectual development, and the education of others. Bentley's activity in, indeed his passion for, collecting all sorts of curiosities, tangible and otherwise, will be the focus of one session. Finally, as spring brings longer days and warmer nights, Mr. Bentley himself will appear for a walk about the East Parish in 1819 and the buildings and personalities he knew so well.

Donald Friary, a Salem resident since 2005, is President of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts and Principal with History for Hire. He was for twenty-eight years Executive Director of Historic Deerfield, Inc. and has taught at the State University of New York at New Paltz and at Smith College. He holds three degrees in American Civilization: an A.B. from Brown University and his A.M. and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. He is also a member of the American Antiquarian Society, a Fellow of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and a member of the board of Historic Salem, Inc. The author of

numerous articles and reviews in early American history, he has appeared on the

streets of Salem in costume and in character as the Reverend Bentley. Members will also recall his fascinating lecture this past year, with Margherita Desy, on the Great Salem Fire of 1914.

We hope you will be as enthusiastic about these two new courses as we are and we look forward to receiving your registration forms! And do remember that Athenaeum courses fill quickly, so those interested in taking part are urged to reserve a space now by calling Jean Marie Procious, Athenaeum Director, at 978-744-2540.

—Sue Weaver Schopf
Chair, Education Committee

Deliverance Dane from page 4

cure. Before time runs out, she needs to locate the actual physick book once owned by Deliverance Dane. In her search, the Salem Athenaeum lends a hand by providing Connie with an important clue. As the pieces of Deliverance's harrowing story fall into place, Connie begins to fear that she is more tied to Salem's dark past than she could have ever imagined.



Brian Pellinen

Katherine Howe is currently completing a Ph.D. in American and New England Studies at Boston University. Two of her ancestors were tried as witches in 1692. Elizabeth Proctor survived the ordeal; Elizabeth Howe did not. The idea for *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* developed while Katherine was studying for her exams, walking her dog through the woods between Marblehead and Salem, Massachusetts. She is a member of the Salem Athenaeum and spent some time working on the book in the reading room. She lives in Marblehead with her husband, Louis Hyman. □

News from Development

As most Athenaeum members know, the Athenaeum has been engaged in a strategic planning exercise with a consultant for the past year, supported in part by a grant from the Fidelity Foundation and in part from private donors (no Athenaeum operating funds were used). Our aim has been to create a realistic long-range plan for managing the library's future, taking into account its collections, programs, and building and grounds. Our studies were begun before the present economic downturn, and have been unavoidably affected by it. We are now winding down this relationship, and will shortly produce a report of our work, which we invite you to read. There will be a copy in the library.

Among key questions we explored

were: what role does the library play in the community; could we realistically launch a fundraising campaign to help ensure our future and the future of our collections; how are visitors making use of our collections, and what do they value in them. Our studies produced much valuable information that we hope to provide in our final report.

One element required by our systematic review of library assets and operations was an evaluation of the condition of our collections by an outside professional agency, in order to create a realistic plan for conserving and/or protecting our more valuable books. To respond, we have engaged the **Northeast Document Conservation Center** for its review of signal elements of the Athenaeum collection and an assessment of our conservation needs and costs. This review was scheduled for late July, and we will incorporate its findings into our final strategic plan.

If you have questions about this planning process, or about our report, kindly contact Jean Procious, Director, or Francie King, President of the Board.

Meanwhile, if you would like to participate in our development and fundraising efforts during the coming year, we welcome you.

—Francie King

YOU CAN HELP THE ATHENÆUM

The Athenaeum needs your generosity. Donations of the following items will be greatly appreciated:

- One or more laptop computers
- Gift certificates to Staples and other office supply stores.
- Energy efficient compact fluorescent bulbs for the stacks.

REGISTRATION FORM FOR SALEM ATHENÆUM COURSES

(Please return to Jean Marie Procious, Director
337 Essex Street, Salem, MA 01970)

Name _____

Address _____

Email Address: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Athenaeum Member? _____

Please check all that apply:

_____ I wish to register for **Darwin and *On the Origin of Species*** (Sept. 17-Oct. 22).

_____ I wish to register for **William Bentley's Salem** (Apr. 5-May 10).

Tuition: \$175 for Athenaeum members, \$195 for non-members.

Office use only:

Payment/Date received:

Trustees:

Frances B. King - President
 Susan Foster - Vice President
 Dana Jordan - Treasurer
 Richard Scott - Clerk
 David Ashton
 Charles Dimino
 Sandra Heaphy
 Maura Henry
 Richard Jendrysik
 Frederick D. Mason III
 Sue Weaver Schopf
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Library Volunteers:

Donna Albino
 Jim Austin
 Joanne Driscoll Campbell
 Marla Gearhart
 Pam Jendrysik
 Peter Little
 Carolyn McGuire
 Jen Meger
 Jane Mosakowski
 Nancy TenBroeck
 Elaine von Bruns
 Winifred Wilkens

**Welcome to the following new members:**

Rev. and Mrs. Joseph Bassett
 Sidney Berger
 Joanne D. and Sean Campbell
 Jacqueline Eng
 James E. Gately
 Mark and Kathleen Hussey
 Jill Jacobsen
 Louis N. Mangifesti
 Andrew and Jen Meger
 Gary and Cheryl Michaels
 Holliday Pulsifer
 Cynthia Worthen

Congratulations to New proprietors
Neil and Martha Chayet
Charles and Elaine von Bruns In**In memoriam**
George D. Heinz

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