

Early Spring 2006

THE SALEM ATHENÆUM

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WWW.SALEMATHENAEUM.NET



FOUNDED 1760

LIBRARY HOURS:

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

THE SALEM ATHENÆUM NEWSLETTER

SAVE THESE DATES!

(Additional information - see page 2)

February 25 – Closing of exhibit,
“CHARM OF THE BOOK COVER”

March 7 – FIRST ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE
LECTURE by PROF. MARJORIE GARBER

March 26 – CHILDREN’S PROGRAM:
AUTHOR JILL STOVER

March 28 – Tim Kenslea reads from
SEDGWICKS IN LOVE

April 11 – ADAMS LECTURE: DAVID
HACKETT FISCHER on G. WASHINGTON

April 15, 11 AM – EASTER EGG HUNT

April 25 – THE DERBYS IN THE
REVOLUTION (co-presentation with
Salem Maritime National Historic Site)

APRIL 27 – POETRY READING (by mem-
bers and guests).

May 3, 7:30 PM – ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE ATHENÆUM – all welcome;
come early for best seats

MAY 13 – BUILDING & GROUNDS CLEAN-
UP DAY: come and help us!

May 18 – NIGHT OF RARE BOOKS

∞ FROM THE PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES ∞

It was a pleasant shock to pass the Athenæum late one snowy night in December and see the porch of our elegant building welcomingly decorated with a magnificent Christmas tree, beautifully lit. The Athenæum's façade has never looked so beautiful. A special thanks to Serge Sacharuk for graciously donating such a fine tree, and to his son-in-law (Blake Anderson) as well as his grandchildren (Tasha and Frazer) for braving the frost to set it up. Here's hoping that this becomes another cherished Athenæum tradition.

Thanks also to Elaine von Bruns, and to all who helped her, for the inspired and enlightening exhibit on book cover art. The care and artistry of this display sets a new standard for Athenæum exhibits. If you haven't yet seen the treasures Elaine selected from our collection, you have only a few days to do so. Please don't miss it.

The Athenæum continues to face the same challenges that beset other worthy not-for-profit

organizations. Yet as we struggle with our financial burdens, we also continually witness omens of hope. New members join at a healthy clip and participate in our programs. Eleven of you joined us last month alone. Members, new and old, offer their services as volunteers. The Athenæum was filled to capacity twice last month for electrifying talks on Benjamin Franklin and the Quakers in early Salem.

Even before the dawn of the Internet there were those who declared the Athenæum an anachronism, living on borrowed time. Fortunately, our members have a different point of view. The very word “Athenæum” connotes a quality not available in cyberspace. It has to do with a sense of place, a sense of belonging, of participation. The growth of our programs proves this point. We are looking forward to seeing you all at the Athenæum, often and soon.

Francis Mayo

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SALEM ATHENÆUM

The Salem Athenæum is a contemporary and historic library, dedicated to enriching the lives of its members and its North Shore community by lending, preserving, and adding to its collection of books and documents, by maintaining and enhancing its historic building and grounds, and by offering cultural and educational programs that provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and life-long learning.

UPCOMING EVENTS

(FIRST ANNUAL) SHAKESPEARE LECTURE: “Bartlett’s Familiar Shakespeare: The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Quotation.” Tuesday, March 7; Reception at 6:00 PM, Program 7:00 PM.

To honor the 400th anniversary of two of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*, the Athenæum inaugurates a new lecture series.

One of the most notable Shakespeare scholars of our time – **Marjorie Garber**, Professor of English and American Literature and Language and of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard – will discuss Shakespeare’s unequalled quotability and the wisdom that lies beneath his many memorable lines. Garber is the author of *Shakespeare, After All*.

Members \$15, Non-Members \$20.



CHILDREN’S PROGRAM: Sunday, March 26, 2PM. Author **JILL STOVER** reads from her latest book, *The Trail Ride*.

Come on a trail ride with a real cowgirl! Appropriate for all ages. After hearing tales from a childhood in Texas, young cowgirls and cowboys will write and illustrate a new adventure story. Stover is the author of two other children’s books, *Popsicle Pony* and *Alamo Across Texas*. Copies available for signing and sale.



AUTHOR READING: **TIM KENSLEA** reads from *Sedgewicks in Love: Courtship, Engagement, and Marriage in the Early Republic*. Tuesday, March 28; Reception at 6:00 PM, Program 7:00 PM.

Dr. Kenslea teaches history at Norwell High School in Norwell, MA. His new book explores the changes in the relationships of men and women in the generation born just after the American Revolution, as reflected in the lives of the seven brothers and sisters of one prominent Massachusetts family.



ADAMS LECTURE: Tuesday, Apr. 11, 7:00 PM at East India Marine Hall, Peabody Essex Museum. Reception begins at 6:00 PM, followed by lecture at 7:00 PM.

Acclaimed historian **David Hackett Fischer** was awarded the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for *Washington’s Crossing*, a chronicle of a pivotal moment in American history. When George Washington crossed the Delaware on Christmas 1776, this not only saved the Revolution but gave it new meaning. Dr. Fischer will discuss his research on George Washington and share new findings.

Glover’s Regiment will perform Revolutionary Period music at the event.

Tickets are needed: Members \$20, Non-members \$25.



ANNUAL EASTER EGG HUNT

Saturday April 15, 11 AM.



LECTURE: “Having breakfasted, dined & supped on politics: The Derbys in the Revolution.” Tuesday, April 25, 7:00 PM

Emily A. Murphy, Park Ranger, Salem Maritime National Historic Site and PhD candidate in American Studies at Boston University, will discuss political activities and influence of leading Salem merchant family, the Derbys.

This lecture is co-presented by the Salem Athenæum and the Salem Maritime NHS, and supported by funding from a National Park Service grant.



POETRY READING: Thursday, Apr. 27, 7:00 PM

In honor of **National Poetry Month**, members and guests are invited to bring along a favorite poem, written by themselves or another, to read to the group.



ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday May 3, 7:00 PM.



BUILDINGS & GROUNDS CLEAN-UP DAY

Saturday, May 13, 9 AM to 3 PM

Get to know the other volunteers & have fun!



NIGHT OF RARE BOOKS: Thursday, May 18, 7:00 PM

Members and their guests are invited to bring a rare book from their private collection to share with everyone. **Deb Wender** of North East Document Conservation center will be present to discuss the care and handling of antique books.

Note from the Director:

ATTENTION SUBSCRIBERS!

Now is your chance to bring your involvement with the Athenæum to the next level. Be a 21st-century leader of this historic institution as it reasserts its place in the intellectual community of the North Shore. Let your voice be heard as a voting member; share your professional talents as a Trustee. Join a storied tradition of intellectuals and public servants. Become a shareholder.

Shares are currently available for \$500 plus an annual assessment due following the annual meeting in May. The current rate is \$135 per annum. Inquiries welcomed.

COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Thank you to all who helped make this fall's Book Sale a success. We received hundreds of donations of books and countless hours of assistance with sorting, selling, and cleanup. We netted \$1,040; this has funded cleaning and preservation supplies, including foam book supports that allow fragile volumes to be read without further damage to the bindings.

During the careful sorting of the donated books, we selected items to add to the collections, new titles as well as replacements for worn and damaged copies.

We are planning to make the book sale an annual fall event. Bring your donations anytime during open hours; the sorting process will be ongoing.

The Collections Committee will be undertaking a survey of books on the shelves, in conjunction with updating circulation records. According to our records, some titles have been out for several years! Please check your shelves for Athenæum books that may have been interfiled and return them promptly to help us with the process.

Work days for the Collections Committee are every Friday from 1 to 5 PM. **We need volunteers.** Could you plan to join us on a regular basis? Some ongoing projects are the book sale, re-ordering and organizing the collections, cleaning and stabilizing the books, locating missing titles, and exhibit research, design, and preparation. Interested? Contact Jean Marie.



BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Our building turns 100 next year and we continue to carefully address its many needs.

The exterior was painted over the summer; this fall brought the replacement of the water main and the climate control unit in the Rare Book Room. After the heat was turned on this winter, we discovered that the radiator in the front hall had to be replaced because its leaks threatened the floor and basement ceiling.

A new electrical panel was installed on the second floor and outlets were installed (for the first time) in the Trustees' Room. Ongoing electrical work continues, with re-wiring and grounding the lighting fixtures. Many have the original knob and tube wiring; and some are still gas fixtures!

Many of you remember that our copper roof was replaced less than 10 years ago; however evidence of a leak appeared on the Trustees' Room ceiling. The problem was quickly identified and corrected, and when the weather gets warmer the ceiling will be plastered and painted.



Another spruce-up day is scheduled for **Saturday, May 13**. Volunteers are needed to help plan the projects as well as complete the work. We hope that you will contact Jean Marie and lend a hand.

CHARM OF THE BOOK COVER

∞ EXHIBIT CLOSING ∞

The current exhibit, *Charm of the Book Cover: American Decorative Bindings, 1890–1910*, began in November 2005 and will run through the end of February.

Guest Curator **Elaine von Bruns** is an active member of the Collections Committee and discovered this treasure trove of visually lush bindings among Athenæum holdings. Like most Athenæum members, von Bruns is a voracious reader and book lover. In recent years, she developed an interest in the art of the book. Appreciation of illustrators and book cover artists and the apex of American decorative bindings at the turn of the last century formed the foundation of what became an extensive survey of Athenæum collections and revealed beauty that had hitherto been obscured on the bookshelves.

Elaine conducted research to identify known titles and also combed the stacks shelf by shelf. Each discovered volume was then carefully cleaned and assessed. Many of the covers are signed, and she managed to identify nearly all by their monograms, but a number remain a mystery. A comprehensive catalog has been prepared with images of the covers and information about the artists. Plans to further utilize the information she has compiled include an on-line exhibit as well as the addition of cards to the catalog to allow searching by artist names.

The ever-gracious von Bruns wishes to extend her gratitude for the opportunity granted by the Athenæum to conduct this treasure hunt as well as to expand her own knowledge of the subject. A special thank-you to the **Collections Committee**, and to **Julie Lutts** for artistic support.

Viewers of the exhibit were encouraged to vote for a favorite cover, and the runaway winner was *Hawthorne and Lavender* by W. E. Henley. The artist was Henry Thayer, founder of The Decorative Designers, a firm that created more than 25,000 decorated covers. This firm was unique in that a number of artists were employed, each responsible for certain aspects of the design. As a result, the finished work was almost always a communal effort. Division of labor in the design industry was novel at the time.

Jean Marie Procius



The **Scrabble Club** meets on **Thursdays**, 7 to 9 PM



Writers' Group, led by J. D. Scrimgeour –
2nd and 4th **Wednesdays**



Trustees:

Francis Mayo – President, Board of Trustees
Blake Anderson – Finance Committee
Jean Dennis – Treasurer
Julie Lutts – Children’s Programs
Patricia Roka – Members’ Committee
Sue Schopf – Education Committee
Richard Scott – Vice President; Newsletter
Winifred Wilkens – Clerk; Collections Committee
Vacancy – Building & Grounds

Some of our Volunteers:

Jim Austin
Jessica Barnett – Publicity
Mary Costello – Assistant Editor, Newsletter
Marla Gearhart
Pamela & Richard Jendrysik
Nancy TenBroeck – Editor, Publisher of Newsletter
Elaine von Bruns – Curator, Book Cover Show

Former Harvard librarian Alex Wright recently asked in the *Christian Science Monitor*, “Is a library just a collection of books?” His answer was a resounding “No.” Discussing the renowned library at Alexandria, he wrote,

The 500,000-odd scrolls were certainly a big draw, but the library was more than a depository....It was more like a Greco-Roman think tank. It was a living, human institution....Perhaps it should come as no surprise that the emergence of the internet has coincided with a doubling of public library attendance.

“It’s so much easier to suggest solutions when you don’t know too much about the problem.”
– Malcolm Forbes.

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”
– George Bernard Shaw.

Quotations from Sunbelt Software, *W2Knews*

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