

Salem Athenæum News

Incorporated in 1810

Winter 2012

In This Issue

The Front Steps
 Conservation Initiative
 Bicentennial Book
 Book Group
 January Concert
 Winter Gathering
 Dickinson's Romance
 Writers Open Studio
 Robert Browning at 200
 Mightier Than the Sword
 Clockwork and Cocktails
 Upcoming Courses
 Winter Exhibition
 Adams Lecture Preview
 Recent Events
 Also at the Athenæum
 Welcome!



Letter from the President

Dear Members and Friends,

We're still celebrating the repairs to our historic library's front steps -- what a pleasure it is to see that once-compromised stairway fully repaired and again providing a welcome entry to our building -- not a moment too soon for Old Man Winter. It was a heavy

burden to add to an already modest operating budget, but many of you rose to the occasion during our recent annual appeal and have helped us defray some of the expense. I can't express how grateful we are for your generosity. As with so many of Salem's iconic buildings, the Athenæum, too needs loving care and attention from time to time, and it is wonderful to see that those who enjoy it are also helping to keep it sound.

I'm delighted this month to tell you that we will soon launch our Adopt-a-Book program, enabling our fellow book lovers to participate in our newly energized book conservation efforts. Look for our Conservation Night this spring, and stay tuned for more details coming soon.

More immediately, we're holding our annual winter fundraiser this month (with proceeds going towards the costs of those now-beautiful new front steps), on January 17, which if tradition serves, will be the coldest night of the winter! All the more reason to join us at the Adriatic Restaurant in Salem for warm libations, complimentary hors d'oeuvres, and good company. It's from 6 to 8 p.m. and all are welcome. [Tickets are \\$20.](#)

**Don't miss
our Winter
Gathering
at the
Adriatic!
January 17**

**Save
the
Dates!**

**March 31
Clockwork and
Cocktails**

**April 24
Adams Lecture:
John Stilgoe**

Finally, be sure to check out the course and program highlights for this winter and early spring, including the multiweek course, "The Wit and Wisdom of Oscar Wilde," with Theo Theoharis; an evening of Robert Browning with Sue Schopf; and our annual Adams Lecture in April, featuring Harvard's John Stilgoe. And that's only a taste. Check all the listings at www.salemathenaeum.net and take your pick.

Bundle up, and we'll see you at the Athenæum soon!

Francie

Francie King
President, Board of Trustees
Salem Athenæum

Front Step Repairs Completed!

Anyone who visited the library this fall could not fail to notice that our century-old front steps underwent a major, unanticipated, and expensive repair, completed just in time for winter. This was an unbudgeted financial burden of more than \$25,000. While the trustees had set aside more than \$8,000 for special projects and emergencies, you can see that we have a substantial gap to fill.

As you continue to enjoy the Athenæum in the coming year, please remember the library's place in your life and all that it brings to Salem and the region. Remember too that all elegant and elderly buildings like ours require the best and most thoughtful care--an expensive proposition.

Please be as generous as you can, and know that your help, in any amount, is greatly appreciated.



Athenæum Launches a Book Conservation Initiative

A principal attraction of the Athenæum is its exceptional collection of 18th and 19th century rare books. Unless you have visited the stacks lately, you may not be aware of how many of our most-beloved volumes are in dire need of repair.



To address our conservation needs systematically, the Athenæum is initiating an annual "Adopt-a-Book" conservation program. This spring we will hold our first Conservation Night to match individual books in our core collection in need of work with a member or members working together who volunteer to underwrite the cost of restoration. Those who adopt a book will be thanked in a special bookplate to be affixed in each renewed volume.



Snow Policy

During the winter months, if a city-wide parking ban is announced, the Athenæum will be closed.

Any events or meetings scheduled that day will be cancelled. Events will be rescheduled whenever possible.

The Collections Committee selected 22 candidate books for work. The Athenæum then retained Marie Oedel, a Proprietor of the Salem Athenæum and books conservator for the library of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, to prepare a condition and recommended treatment report for each. The Athenæum is now obtaining price proposals from select bookbinders and conservators for all 22 volumes. Depending on need, cost and practicality, the Collections Committee will select 10 to 15 books to be offered at the first annual conservation night next spring for sponsorship.

Once all the restoration work is completed the restored volumes will be on view at the second annual conservation night in 2013, when a second group of treasured books will be offered for adoption by generous members.

Stay tuned to this Newsletter--and to emails from the Salem Athenæum-- for further news on the Adopt-a-Book effort. Members interested in becoming sponsors should email [Jean Marie Prociuous](#) now to be on the email list for updates.

Bicentennial Book

It's here! *The Salem Athenæum in 2010: A Bicentennial Celebration* is printed and ready for your perusal.

Featuring crisp black-and-white images and reproductions of decorative printers' marks from our collection, this elegant gold-stamped cloth-bound volume documents the Athenæum's 200th year.

The Salem Athenæum in 2010 presents a history of the library since 1910, written by historian and teacher Charles Newhall (a past president of the Athenæum); a survey of highlights from our collections, collecting practices through the century, and the library's decorative holdings are presented by Athenæum Director Jean Marie Prociuous.



We are deeply pleased that former Chief Justice Margaret Marshall of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court allowed us to reprint her remarks from the opening night of our joint exhibition of the 1629 Massachusetts Bay Charter with the Peabody Essex Museum--a highlight of our Bicentennial year.

The book includes stunning images of the library; a list of the programs offered throughout the bicentennial year; records of Athenæum Proprietors in 2010, along with the names of the original owners of their library shares; a list of librarians since 1812; the Athenæum By-laws; and the roster of the 2010 Board of Trustees.

Printed in a limited edition of just 200 copies, we urge you to secure yours while supplies last for \$30.

You may purchase your copy through the [Athenæum web site](#), or by bringing a check to the library. Don't wait! Supplies are limited!

The Salem Athenæum in 2010: A Bicentennial Celebration was made possible by a grant from the Essex National Heritage Commission and by the generous sponsors of the Salem Athenæum Bicentennial.

New Book Groups

Choice of meetings:

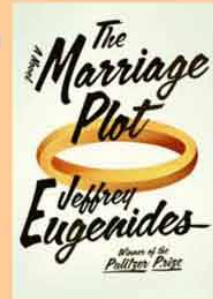
Wednesday, Jan. 11 at 12:30 or 7 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 14 at 10 a.m.

In November the Athenæum started a new book group! The initial meeting, organized by Rose Kilroy and Jean Marie Prociou, drew 36 members (plus several more who could not attend that night). The group meets monthly and has three meeting times to accommodate its large size and varied schedules: second Wednesdays at 12:30 and 7:00 p.m., and second Saturdays at 10:00 a.m.

This book discussion group offers Athenæum members a chance to discuss, debate, and grow together as book lovers. The reading list will include both fiction and non-fiction and each month's title will be selected by popular vote.

For January we are reading *The Marriage Plot* by Jeffrey Eugenides.



Songs of the Greatest Generation

Saturday, Jan. 14, 2012, 3:00 p.m.

Soprano Mary Shaw and pianist Bill Sano return for an afternoon of musical memories from the 1940s and early 1950s. (You may remember their previous concert at the Athenæum, "Songs of World War II.")



Travel down memory lane with the songs made famous by Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett and more!

Members, \$10; non-members, \$15. Free for students with ID.

[Register Here.](#)

Winter Gathering

Tuesday, Jan. 17, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Snow date Monday, Jan. 23

Adriatic Restaurant and Bar
155 Washington Street, Salem



Join the Salem Athenæum and Adriatic Restaurant and Bar for a mid-winter cocktail party and fundraiser for the Athenæum at the restaurant. Enjoy complimentary hors d'oeuvres, and soak in the warmth of one of Salem's premier eating establishments.

The Salem Athenæum began its annual winter cocktail gatherings in 2010 kick off its Bicentennial. For this year's fundraiser, the library focuses on raising funds for the recent front-step repair.

Tickets are \$20 per person.

[Register Here.](#)

All proceeds go to the Salem Athenæum.

Emily Dickinson and Judge Lord of Salem

Tuesday, Jan. 24, 7:00 p.m.

Although Emily Dickinson never married, her evocative poems have provoked much scholarly speculation about her love life. According to Susan Snively, a poet and Dickinson scholar who taught at Amherst College for 27 years, Dickinson's poems and letters reveal her romance with the eminent Massachusetts Supreme Court Judge Otis Phillips Lord, her father's friend from Salem.



Snively will focus on both the known facts of the fascinating relationship between Emily Dickinson and Judge Lord, and on the controversies it has provoked among biographers and critics.

Athenæum and Historic Salem members \$10; non-members \$15.
Free for students with ID.

[Register Here.](#)

Presented by Salem Athenæum and Historic Salem Inc.

Writers Open Studio

Wednesdays, 8:45 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Returning in January are Open Studio hours on Wednesdays mornings. Writers are welcome to work quietly in the Athenæum reading room along with J.D. Scrimgeour, Professor of English, Salem State University.

Please note that the **Salem Writers' Group** also continues to meet on first and third Tuesdays each month at 7:30 p.m. All writers with work-in-progress are welcome to share their work and provide feedback for others.

Robert Browning at 200: The Case of the Accidental Victorian

Tuesday, Feb. 28, 7:00 p.m.

Frequently remembered for his romantic elopement to Italy with Elizabeth Barrett—a poet more famous than himself at the time—Browning is unquestionably the most modern of all the Victorian poets, both in terms of his experiments in poetic form and in the subjects of his verse. In probing the psychology of his characters, Browning addressed every modern anxiety with surprising frankness.



His poems consider provocative topics such as sexuality and gender roles, the breakdown of a marriage, religious skepticism and the will to believe, the psychology of the artist, the relativity of truth and perception, the logic of the deranged mind, the deep longing for the infinite, and the transforming power of love.

In honor of Browning's 200th birthday, Sue Weaver Schopf will discuss Browning's poetic legacy and will lead us through some of his most remarkable works, including one that she describes as "the most post-modern of his works--the breathtaking 'A Death in the Desert.'" Please visit the Poetry Foundation website at the following url to read the poem "A Death in the Desert" prior to the lecture or to print out a copy to bring with you: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173008>

Members \$10; non-members, \$15.

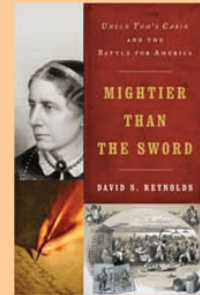
Free for students with ID.

[Register Here.](#)

Mightier Than the Sword: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Battle for America

Thursday, Mar. 29, 7:00 p.m.

David S. Reynolds, Distinguished Professor of English and American Studies at the City University of New York, discusses his recent book, which explores *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its political, cultural, and social legacy from its publication in 1852 to the present day.



Members \$10; non-members \$15.

Free for students with ID.

[Register Here.](#)

Clockwork and Cocktails

(an Athenæum Fundraiser)

Saturday, Mar. 31, 8:00 p.m.

Save the date for an evening celebrating the steampunk genre--The Future viewed through a spyglass to The Past.

Details to come...

Courses

Registration is now open for our Winter and Spring courses. For additional details, visit our [website](#).



The Wit and Wisdom of Oscar Wilde

Saturdays from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25; March 3, 10, 17, 24

The course will be taught by Dr. Theoharis C. Theoharis, who has lectured widely on American and European literature both in the United States and abroad. He is author of *James Joyce's Ulysses: An Anatomy of the Soul* and *Ibsen's Drama: Right Action and Tragic Joy*, and well as the translator of *Before They Could Change Them: The Complete Poems of Constantine P. Cavafy*. He has received teaching awards from UC Berkeley, MIT, and Harvard. He has taught courses on the epic, tragedy, and modern fiction

at Harvard for the last 25 years.

Members \$185; non-members \$205

The War of 1812--the Second War for Independence--or, Mr. Madison's War

Thursdays from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
Apr. 12, 19; May 3, 10, 17, 24

The War of 1812 was a three-year conflict between the United States and the British Empire, including Upper and Lower Canada. The causes and outcome of the War are still fiercely debated by historians. Join Dr. Robert Allison of Suffolk University as he peels back the layers of this complex situation that nearly caused the secession of New England from the Union.



Members \$175; non-members \$195

[Register Here.](#)

Winter Exhibition: Cast Party!

Dickens' Characters Celebrate His 200th Birthday.

Come meet Dickens' characters and join in the festivities at the "Cast Party," our Winter exhibit. Each character featured has a brief description of who he or she is, and often includes a distinctive quote from a Dickens source work.

Honorary Curator Elaine Von Bruns has gathered various editions of Dickens, photographs and collectibles, in addition to having compiled the colorful character profiles. The cases include: "Dickens' Life," "Villains," "Children Parenting Adults" featuring sweet young things caring for their fathers, "Christmas," "Goodwill and Cruelty," "Pickwick and his Followers" and "Pitiful Ones."

There is also a Miss Havisham table, with her wedding parasol, shoes, portrait, various interpretations of Miss Havisham, and of course, a coating of cobwebs.

As you leave the exhibit, don't forget to vote for your favorite Dickens' character!



Adams Lecture: John Stilgoe

Tuesday, Apr. 24, 2012

Save the date for our Adams Lecture with award-winning historian and photographer John R. Stilgoe. A fellow of the Society of American Historians, Stilgoe is the Robert and Lois Orchard Professor in the History of Landscape at the Visual and Environmental Studies Department at Harvard University, where he has been teaching since 1977.

To learn more about Professor Stilgoe and his work, visit his [home page](#).

Recent Events

The following highlights recent noteworthy events at the Athenæum.

Special Salon: Echoes of Salem in the Historic Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

On November 18, Nicholas Stanley-Price, a specialist in cultural heritage preservation who serves on the Advisory Committee of Rome's Non-Catholic Cemetery, gave a slide show presentation at the Athenæum.

This cemetery contains possibly the highest density of famous and important graves anywhere in the world, including the final resting-place of poets Shelley and Keats. Notable Salem natives, Sarah Parker Remond, William Wetmore Story, and members of the Crowninshield family rest here.



Christmas in Salem Tour

Historic Salem Inc.'s 2011 Christmas in Salem tour, December 2-4, featured a familiar building this year. This season's tour, "Rediscover the McIntire District" highlighted the work of architect William G. Rantoul, whose renovations and designs are featured in private homes and public buildings in the district—including the Athenæum. The Reading Room and foyer were decked by Marblehead Garden Center.

Fireside Mirth

On December 8 the Athenæum opened its doors to a festive open mike night hosted by Endicott College Professor Dan Sklar. Writers and musicians of all ages shared holiday-themed stories, poems, anecdotes, and songs. Over 30 people attended and most participants prepared their own original material. Prizes were distributed in several categories, but the audience received the best gift of all in the form of a heart-warming winter night's entertainment.



Also at the Athenæum

The following events are not sponsored by the Salem Athenæum. Due to their cultural focus, they are occurring at the Athenæum and may be of interest to members.

CSEM presents The Coriolanus Quartet

Saturday, Jan. 28, 8:00 p.m.



CSEM presents the exciting debut of CORIOLANUS, a new string quartet of early-music specialists, all distinguished performers in demand around the country. They bring us favorites by Franz Joseph Haydn, the beloved "father of the string quartet," freshly interpreted, with the mellow clarity of gut strings on period instruments. Warm your heart with Haydn's graceful wisdom. A convivial reception follows the concert.

For tickets and more information, call 617-489-2062 or see www.csem.org.

Members and Seniors, \$25; non-members, \$30.
Free for students 17 and under.



Dickens Fellowship

Literary discussion meetings of *The Pickwick Papers* will be held this Winter on the following Thursdays: Jan. 12, Feb. 2, and Mar. 15.

For details, visit [Dickens North of Boston.](#)

Board of Trustees

David Ashton
Stephen H. Clark
Richard Jendrysik
Sarah Harrington, *Clerk*
Francie King, *President*
David Hart
Sandra Heaphy, *Vice-President*
Donna Seger
Mary Simpson Sousa
Meg Twohey, *Treasurer*
Mary Whitney

Welcome!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Ruth Beebe-Center
Marcia Cannon
Jennifer Klahn and Mark Lindsay
Alice Madio
Noreen Mallon
Roger Mason and Ellen Colingsworth
John Mayer
Mark Murphy
Katherine Murray
Don C. Pinkerton
Liv and David Radue
Leanne Schild
Catherine Stanton
J. Michael Sullivan
Mary Zappas



Salem Athenæum

337 Essex Street
Salem, Massachusetts 01970

Contact Info

For general information about the Athenæum or its events, please contact the Director:

Jean Marie Prociou

978-744-2540

info@salemathenaeum.net

For comments or suggestions about the newsletter, please contact the editor:

Carolyn McGuire

[Contact me!](#)

