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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

*Wednesday, November 20, 2002*

**Andrew M. Lizak**  
**The Fall River Line**

An illustrated lecture on this fascinating topic.  
Location to be announced.

*Saturday, November 23  
through Sunday, December 29, 2002*

**Annual Victorian Holiday Display**  
Monday through Friday, 9am to 4:30pm  
Saturday and Sunday, 1pm to 5pm

*Saturday, December 7, 2002*

**Members' Holiday Open House**  
Held at the Museum building at 451 Rock Street  
7pm to 9pm

**MUSEUM SHOP HOURS**

Monday through Friday  
9:00 am to 4:30 pm  
Additional Weekend Hours from  
November 23 to December 29, 2002  
1:00 pm to 5:00 pm



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Volume 14, Number 3

**The Fall River  
Historical Society  
Report**

**CHARLES HENRY WELLS: AN INSIDER SPEAKS OF LIZZIE**

(Editor's Note: As the only major archive on the Borden case, the Historical Society is oftentimes contacted by private individuals having in their possession materials such as letters or photographs, which offer us further insights into the events of August 4, 1892, and the lives of the individuals involved. Frequently, these historical gems have come into their possession through ancestors directly involved with the Borden family. The Historical Society, in its desire to fulfill its mission statement, to "preserve and protect artifacts related to the rich and varied history of the city of Fall River and its peoples..." has endeavored to locate those individuals possessing this Borden material, often using contacts deeply-rooted in the organization since its founding in 1921. In many cases, there is a reluctance on the part of these people to make public their "bits of history." This is either due to their respect for the old adage of their ancestors, "We don't talk about that any more," or because they are hesitant to be contacted by those interested in the Borden case. As these materials become available, the Historical Society is delighted to have the opportunity to publish them, as is the case with this invaluable contemporary look at a fascinating subject.)

Charles Henry Wells was born January 22, 1863, in South Kingstown, Rhode Island, the son of John Henry and Susan Rebecca (Harley) Wells. He had a brother, Edward Everett Wells, who was born two years later. Mrs. Wells died in 1867, and the following year J. Henry Wells, as he was called, married Elizabeth Brenton Hazard. The couple was to have no children.

The family lived in Kingston Village until 1875 when they moved to West Kingston. Here Mr. Wells established a large general store with living quarters on the second floor. The new railroad station was very close to the store.

Early in 1877, J. Henry Wells answered an ad in the Providence Journal for a treasurer and manager for a "Fall River manufactory." After an interview in Rhode Island and a trip to Fall River, he was chosen as treasurer of the Fall River Spool and Bobbin Factory. On February 23, 1877, the family moved to Fall River, Massachusetts. Young Charles, fourteen at the time, was most unhappy at the move because he loved the trains which passed close to his father's store and eagerly helped out working on the freight cars.

Once settled in Fall River, Charles attended the Slade School for a few months and then the Davenport High School where on Friday afternoons students were required to give "declamations." Charles Wells considered this to be an "awful ordeal." One Friday afternoon in the spring of 1877 he just couldn't do it; he left school and never returned. At the age of fourteen he went to work at the Spool and Bobbin Factory, working 60 hours a week from 6:30 in the morning until 6 at night.

He was employed at the Spool and Bobbin Factory for twelve years, working his way up to shipping clerk and then clerk in the office. In 1889 he went to work for the W.C. Atwater coal company where he remained for over thirty years before retiring due to ill health.

In April of 1883, Charles Wells married Jeannette M. Titus and they had three daughters. The Wells family lived in Fall River first on Brayton Avenue, then known as Six Rod Way, moving to a house on Ridge Street in 1881. In 1903 Charles Wells built a house in Somerset large enough to accommodate his extended family: his wife and three daughters, his father and stepmother and the sister of his first wife, who had moved with the family from Rhode Island. He died in Somerset, Massachusetts, on November 17, 1930.

Although Charles H. Wells left school at the age of fourteen, he apparently loved to write, because his family has in its possession numerous notebooks filled with his writings on all sorts of subjects. This article on Lizzie Borden, composed some time around the turn of the century, is one of them. As is stated in the text, the Wells family was well known to the family of Andrew J. Borden, with the author's father, J. Henry Wells, serving as one of the pallbearers for Abby Borden.

(Editor's Note: The following has been transcribed from the writings of Charles Henry Wells as it appears in the original manuscript. No changes have been made.)

**"Lizzie A. Borden"**

The trial of this girl for the murder of her father and her stepmother was one of the most noteworthy, and attracted wide-



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spread interest all over the United States. Miss Borden was well known to C. H. Wells and wife long before the commission of the crime. For a number of years the Borden family occupied a pew in the Central Congregational Church F.R. nearly opposite the one occupied by J. Henry Wells and family. It was the usual thing for Mr. Borden and Mr. Wells to walk out of church together. Lizzie was an interested member of the Christian Endeavor Society at the Central church and a teacher at the Central Mission Sunday School.

On the day of the murder, C.H. Wells was in his office alone in F.R. and overheard Mr. Philip H. Borden, then City Engineer, say something about "Andrew Borden and his wife" as he passed the open door of the office just before eleven o'clock. Soon after this time Rev. Edwin A. Buck, in charge of the Central Mission, came into Mr. Wells' office and told him the news of the murder, adding that he was on his way to make a call upon "Lizzie." He was very much agitated and well along in years and the other clerk in the office of Atwater & Co. (then F.S. Mathewson) having come in, Mr. Wells arranged to walk to the Borden house with Mr. Buck. At the time, he was under the impression that the murder had been committed at Gardner's Neck, knowing as he did that Mr. Borden had a farm over there. It was not until Mr. Buck and he had nearly reached the Borden residence on Second Street, and had seen the crowd in the street in front of the house, that he realized that the crime had been committed there. Mr. Buck, followed by Mr. Wells, walked unhesitatingly to the front door and pulling the bell, both were at once admitted to the house by Miss Alice Russell, a close companion of Lizzie Borden and afterward an important witness at her trial for murder. Mr. Buck went directly upstairs. From the foot of these stairs, as he was left alone by the ascending of the stairs by Mr. Buck and Miss Russell, Mr. Wells could see the form of Andrew Borden as it lay upon the couch in the living room. He was a very tall man and as he reclined easily upon the couch his feet rested upon the floor. Going into the living room, he found Dr. Dolan with a two-foot rule taking measurements of the gashes in the head of Mr. Borden. The appearance of his face was like a mass of raw meat. So many blows had been reined upon his head that there was no semblance to a human face. The top and back of his head did not seem to be seriously injured. Four or five policemen were in the house and others in the yard beside the house.

For a day or two there seemed to be no clue to the murderer. Then one noon time it was rumored that the police suspected the daughter of the slain man and were about to take her into custody. So far from being thought even remotely capable of committing such a crime did Mr. Wells regard Lizzie that when on arriving home that day for dinner, and being asked if there was anything new in the Borden case, he refused to say anything about the rumor he had heard.

In the entire membership of the Christian Endeavor society there was not one who seemed a more devoted member than had Lizzie Borden. Her class at Mission School had for some time been the next one to his and he had known how regular she had been in her attendance, therefore it seemed beyond reason that she could have been suspected of doing such a deed.

But Miss Borden was arrested and after a preliminary hearing in the District Court before Judge Blaisdell, was bound over to the higher court and committed, without bail, to the jail in Taunton. Here she remained some months. During her confinement here, she was visited nearly every Saturday by Miss Elizabeth Johnstown, a friend of both Miss Borden and Mrs. Wells and living at that time in Mrs. J. Henry Wells' house. Miss Johnstown took to the jail photos, magazines, books, and

anything else that would help to occupy Miss Borden's mind during the time from one Saturday to another. Miss Johnstown and Miss Borden had grown up from childhood in the same locality and both had been known as small children by Andrew C. Wright, sheriff of Bristol County, and keeper of Taunton jail, and his wife. They were allowed privileges which would not have been permitted otherwise. Miss Borden was confined to her cell all the time except during a brief daily exercise in the corridor of the jail but Miss Johnston was permitted to spend the day in the cell with Miss Borden and did so. All this time she was as firmly convinced of Miss Borden's innocence of the crime with which she was charged as Mr. Wells had been and still was.

Miss Russell, of whom mention has been made, Miss Johnstown and Miss Borden had been the closest friends. (The three walked to and from church and Endeavor meeting together as a usual thing.) Miss Russell as one of the very first to hear of the murder and to go to the Borden house (where she remained for several days) was a witness before the grand jury when the indictment was found against Miss Borden and also at the hearing in the District Court. At both these occasions she testified but did not tell of an occurrence at the Borden house on the Sunday morning following the murder. This occurrence was the burning of a dress by Lizzie Borden in the kitchen stove. One of the mysteries of the case to the police was as to how Miss Borden could have stood over her victims without getting marked with their blood. A careful examination of the clothing in the various clothes presses in the house had disclosed no dress with suspicious stains upon it but this search was not made until, all outside clues leading to no result, attention was directed to the inmates of the house at the time of the murder and by this time the dress had been burned. As the time for the trial in the Superior Court drew near Miss Russell became troubled in her mind for the oath that she would be obliged to take required her to "tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." On the stand at the final trial she told of this circumstance thus relieving her own conscience. The burning of the dress was later in the trial explained by Emma Borden, (Lizzie's sister,) as the destruction of a dress which was covered with paint spots but from this time Miss Russell's feelings regarding Miss Borden underwent a sudden change and almost simultaneously Miss Johnstown's feelings also. Where both had proclaimed their belief in her innocence and had been intimate with her, now they ceased to declare their faith in her and ceased all intercourse with her. This intercourse was never resumed. Neither would talk but it appeared as though, no longer convinced of her innocence, they regarded her as possibly, if not probably, guilty. Miss Borden was acquitted at the trial and came back at once to Fall River to live. She called soon after upon Mrs. C.H. Wells and expressed her thanks for all that had been done for her while she had been in jail. She had written to both Mr. & Mrs. Wells several times and in one letter had expressed her interest in a snap shot, sent to her by them, of the brook beside the school house where both of them had gone to school together.

The mystery of the crime was never cleared up. Miss Borden owed her acquittal very largely to the ability of her lawyers who succeeded in having damaging evidence against her excluded and who made wonderful pleas to the jury on her behalf. Ex-Gov. Robinson's plea in particular was a wonderful effort, taking the ground from under the feet of Attorney General Knowlton and preparing the jury to discount what the Attorney General would later say to them.

## "Mrs. Santa Claus asserts Herself"

(The following piece is from the lighter side of the Historical Society's collection of manuscripts. Inscribed in ink on a gatefold sheet of Congress lined stationery, a notation on the back explains the poem was "Recited at Maple Street School Fall River, Mass. Jan. 6 1888.")

Oh, it's all very fine for that husband of mine  
To be courted and praised and invited to dine;  
Though late in the day, "I'll take while I may  
My woman's one privilege of "saying her say."

Its "Santa Claus, dear" — "ah no Santa Claus here"  
(Pray pardon this poor little tricklesome tear);  
Complimentary strife is the breath of his life,  
But who ever mentions his desolate wife?

Now I've nothing to say in a slanderous way  
Of the man I have promised to love and obey;  
He's a jolly old soul, he acts up to his role  
And as husbands go, he may pass, on the whole.

O, I'd never have spoken — My heart might have broken,  
I'd have died without leaving one remnant of token —  
Did a gossip not say in my hearing one day,  
"Santa Claus is a bachelor, tie-less and gay."

"You mistake" was my cry with a flash of the eye;  
"I'm his patient and hardworking wife, bye the bye";  
And the world I will stun when the gamut I run  
Of all that I've suffered and all that I've done."

My sufferings first. With a heart nigh to burst  
Each Christmas-eve brings me the sharpest and worst  
When quipped for a start I see him depart  
While my tremulous hands seek my quivering heart.

"Be careful" I say "You grow stouter each day"  
We women must smile though our heart strings give way,  
Tight-fit chimneys you know you must surley forego  
Or be roasted alive by the fire below.

"And darling" I add "remember the bad  
Attack of bronchitis you recently had;  
And button your coat high up in the throat,  
And don't cross the streams when the ice is afloat.

And keep a tight rein on My Lady Disdain —  
Look dear she is kicking the dashboard again";  
But away he has sped, heeding naugh I have said,  
While visions of widowhood dance in my head.

Is it nothing I ask that my husband should bask  
In the popular smile, like a belle at a masque,  
While I, poor old crone, sit and cower alone,  
Tight clasping the fingers I've worked to the bone?

With a nod and a blink he would lead you to think  
He had dressed all the dolls ere a weasel could wink  
No, while he's in bed — to his shame be it said  
It is I who am plying the needle and thread.

He goes shopping so grand through the lengths of the land  
But all matters of tastefulness fall to my hand.  
Could he crochet and tat, or trim a doll's hat?  
Take his clumsy thumbs measure — now answer me that.

Oh women, whose days are made radiant with praise,  
Whose trumpets are blown on the high and byways,  
Pray stifle your scorn for a woman forlorn,  
Who is driven to sounding her own little horn.

## Christmas in Fall River - As Seen Through the Historical Society Archive



Interior view of R.A. McWhirr's, decorated for the holiday season.  
(Henry Boudreau photo)



A cluster of poinsettia (at center) overwhelmed by  
"Hair Pin Values" in this window display at E.P. Charlton Co.  
(Temple Parsons photo)



"Merry Christmas, Jenny," circa 1915.  
(Temple Parsons photo)

# Legacy

by Jeannette D. Denning

(Editor's Note: While we were researching genealogical background on the Wells and Kenyon families for the *Mourning Cards* article in the ACQUISITIONS column of a past newsletter, Mrs. Denning told a story of another Kenyon relation and her rather unusual legacy. This curious little tale seemed too interesting not to share and so we asked her to put it down on paper. The following is what resulted.)

I have in my dining-room window a very large and very old Christmas cactus, which was left to me a little over fifty years ago. I named him Jehoshaphat, supposedly after one of those very long-lived Biblical characters because I knew that he was about fifty years old when I got him. But my Biblical knowledge turned out to be rather inaccurate because the real Jehoshaphat had a life of only about sixty years. Nevertheless the plant's name remained Jehoshaphat, pronounced with an s-sound, not a sh-sound, which is acceptable according to my Random House Dictionary.

I knew that Jehoshaphat had lived in the house my grandfather built in Somerset in 1902, but had been given to a relative of ours, Jennie Kenyon. Jennie had done housework for the Cleary family in Fall River and when the mother of the family died leaving a number of young children, Jennie took them under her wing and brought them up, always careful to see that they maintained their Catholic faith even though she herself was not Catholic. When the youngest Cleary daughter, Dorothy, married and was left with two children to raise, Jennie, now too old to go out to work herself, undertook the task of caring for Dorothy's boys, especially the younger one who was just a baby. This enabled Dorothy to go out to work herself to earn a living for

them. Jennie has always been my idea of a "good person."

Jennie and her adopted family lived on Durfee Street for a while and the cactus bloomed there happily. But then the family moved to Chaloner Street, where, according to Jennie, the plant never produced a blossom. My mother and I went to see Jennie just a few days before she died in 1948 and she asked me if I would like to have the cactus. I was so pleased - it was a wonderful thing to remember Jennie by, and also a rather remarkable plant, being at least fifty years old at the time.

Over the years since 1948, I have treasured the cactus which, as I have said, was named Jehoshaphat. At one point he had for some reason been placed on the floor. We had a couple of lively cocker spaniels who discovered him there and went to town on him. I was horrified when I discovered what had happened - to think that this plant had survived for over fifty years and I had been the one to cause his demise! But fortunately the "pruning" was good for him and he put forth lots of new shoots to replace what the dogs had torn off.

Jehoshaphat resides in a pot about twelve inches in diameter and twelve inches deep. He has a son, Junior, a good-sized plant about half as big as his father. One year when we were members of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and went to the Boston Flower Show, the show had a class for Plants and Their Offspring. I really wanted to enter J. and J., but the thought of transporting these two large plants to Boston and getting them from the parking lot in to the show was just too daunting, plus the fact that entering them required exact dates of birth for them both and these I did not have. I would have liked him to get some recognition for his longevity, however.

It is not often that one is left a plant, but from 1948 to 2001 Jehoshaphat has been a legacy I have been pleased to have. He reminds me of one of the "good people" I have known and I have respect for his long life. I will leave him to my daughter and hope that he continues to thrive.

# Acquisitions

Wetherell Family Collection

An important collection of materials pertaining to the Wetherell family of Fall River has been acquired through the generosity of Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Bradford Wetherell, Jr. Dating from the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries, the myriad artifacts offer us a rare insight into the history, tastes and lifestyle of this interesting family and, at the same time, the history of the place they called home.

Prominent in manufacturing circles during *la belle époque* in Fall River, the Wetherell name became synonymous with the coverings for top rolls used in the spinning process in textile mills. The first manufacturers of roller coverings in Fall River and among the first in the country, their cutting-edge designs and ideas were adopted in nearly all the machinery used in roller establishments during the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries. Their business acumen and inventiveness secured them a place of prominence in manufacturing and social circles. The family genealogy reads like a veritable "who's who" of Southeastern Massachusetts including well-known names such as Bradford, Church, Luther and Bosworth. That members of the Wetherell family helped forge the links of the great chain of success that was Fall River would be an understatement.



Pencil sketch by Daniel Bradford Wetherell, 1918.

The majority of the artifacts in the collection pertain to the lives of three generations of the family: Daniel Wetherell (1828-1893); his son, Alexander Morton Wetherell (1858-1929) and his wife, Annie Hale Bosworth (1857-1937); their son, Daniel Bradford Wetherell (1897-1982), and their daughter Miss Meredith Hale Wetherell (1895-1953).

Fascinating among an extensive and varied collection of family photographs is a series depicting life at Craigville, Massachusetts, a favored summer resort among Fall Riverites, taken ca. 1888. An imperial touch is lent by a magnificently framed and inscribed photograph of H.R.H. Prince Henry of Prussia, presented by the Prince to Rear Admiral George R. H. Buffinton, a Fall River native and uncle to Daniel B. Wetherell into whose possession the photograph passed. From daguerreotypes dating to the dawn of photography to snapshots taken in the 1920's, these rare images captured by and for the Wetherell family have preserved life as it was in old Fall River forever in this medium.

An intriguing collection of ephemera contains everything from eighteenth-century land deeds to marriage certificates, letters and souvenir booklets. A journal of a trip around the world taken by Daniel B. Wetherell in 1919-1920 is accompanied by photographs, negatives, postcards and letters, providing a fascinating glimpse into the post-war world as captured by an astute observer. A collection of World War I "doughboy"



Daniel Bradford Wetherell, circa 1901.

caricature sketches dated 1918 attest to Mr. Wetherell's prowess as an artist. A baby book lovingly handwritten by his mother, Annie Hale Wetherell and detailing everything from nurses and diapers to baby's first Christmas, offers insight into the methods of child care in practice in the 1890's.

Numerous volumes include bound sets of fashionable Victorian magazines as well as religious texts, poetry and novels, the majority of which date to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Most important among the volumes is an extremely rare subscription

copy of Edwin H. Porter's 1893 work, *The Fall River Tragedy*, detailed in the Fall 2001 issue of this publication.

Among a collection of jewelry is a lovely brooch and buckle of ancient mastodon ivory set in gold, as stylish today as when it was worn during the last century. A rare and important mourning ring with a hand-painted ivory miniature depicting a classically draped urn with the monogram "FJ" is set in gold decorated with black enamel. It was worn as a memorial to Fanny Jackson who died on June 20, 1789, at the age of twenty-four. From the collection of Annie Hale (Bosworth) Wetherell comes an Egyptian-inspired ring of gold and enamel set with turquoise and a beautiful pendant necklace set with opals, seed pearls and sapphires, in addition to other pieces. Worn by Alexander M. Wetherell is a gold ring set with a large well-carved intaglio of a male in Elizabethan attire, dating to the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Also worn by the latter gentleman is a ring set with a large stone, possibly tanzanite, dated 1897 and retailed by Tilden Thurber of Providence, Rhode Island, a firm well patronized by Fall River society.

Mrs. Alexander M. Wetherell, as her collection attests, was an avid enthusiast of the popular Victorian and Edwardian era craze for accumulating souvenir spoons. Amassed during an age when the privileged travelled freely throughout the world with little need for passports or visas, these spoons form a travelogue of the "Grand Tour." From Dresden came two spoons, their engraved sterling bowls mounted onto delicately painted porcelain handles.



Annie Hale (Bosworth) Wetherell, 1912. (Gay's Gallery of Art, Fall River, Mass., photo)

From Russia is a heavy silver-gilt piece decorated in polychrome enamel in an exuberant Slavic style, a souvenir of St. Petersburg. Enamels commemorate cities such as Toledo and St. Augustine and countries from Ireland to Egypt. Cast-silver pendants in the form of animals, buildings and human figures dangle from elaborate mounts set into handles attached to engraved bowls. In addition to this collection are several other silver pieces in coin and sterling that descended in the family, in some cases bearing the hallmarks of Fall River silversmiths.



"10 Shopping Days until Christmas" at Gorin's, South Main Street, Fall River. (Henry Boudreau photo)

"Give her The Hoover and you give her the best" R.A. McWhirr's front window, 1920's. (Henry Boudreau photo)



Curiosities include gold nuggets panned by John Luther in California during the Gold Rush in 1849, the doorplate of the family residence at 276 Cherry Street and figural bottles from the mid-nineteenth century. A relic important to the Revolutionary War history of Fall River is a tiller handle wrenched off a British longboat by Nathaniel Luther during the Battle of Fall River on May 25, 1778. The only relic of this event known to be extant, the tiller handle is of oak, hand-carved with a vicious-looking dog. In a fine state of preservation, the piece still retains traces of its original polychrome surface.

This plethora of wide and varied items in the Wetherell collection forms an important family archive. "The Wetherell family hung on to things," said Mrs. Frances Wetherell in an article in the May 24, 2002, *Fall River Herald News*. Concerning the donation to the Historical Society, she added that "it's a family-connected place...it's wonderful to have a place where it will be taken care of." The breadth of this collection provides us with a fascinating look at several generations of a family whose name figures so prominently in the history of Fall River.

The Historical Society will feature a small sampling of items from this collection as a special exhibit in the library of the museum building during the Holiday Open House.

#### WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Alfred & Eleanor Buckley; Claire M. Hanify; Martha S. Howarth; Cecelia Kelly; M. Rita Letendre; Paul & Tammy Levesque; Robert E. Martel; Sara E. Motta; Renee Pineault; Octavia Resendes; Lauren Scrima; Lauren Secatore; Ruth Sudenfield; T. Gorman Reilly; Linda J. Thomas-Saucier

#### WELCOME TO NEW CORPORATE MEMBERS

The Historical Society would like to extend its thanks to the following for becoming a Corporate Member. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Pathology Diagnostics (Jennifer Athearn MD)

#### CURRENT QUESTION

- Q.** Where was the huge garland Christmas tree that once decorated the front of the Cherry & Webb store on South Main Street kept when not in use?
- A.** Aerial photographs in the Historical Society's archival collection reveal the little known fact that the tree was stored flat atop the roof of the Cherry & Webb building when not being used during the holiday season.

## Curator's Corner

### Music Room in Memory of Mrs. Brigham

A generous contribution has recently been received from Society member Mrs. Norma DuVally. At the request of the donor, the funds are to be used to complete the restoration of the music room which is to be dedicated to Mrs. DuVally's long-time friend, the Society's beloved late curator, Mrs. Florence Cook Brigham. Work on the room has been ongoing for some time, this gift allowing for the completion of the restoration for a dedication early next year. The Society is indebted to Mrs. DuVally for her generosity in Mrs. Brigham's memory.

### Climatization System Collapses

The system installed many years ago to control the climatic conditions in the archival area has collapsed and is no longer functioning. It was noticed by the staff that the system was not responding to the control commands and, as such, the area became increasingly damp with mildew being detected in several areas. The potentially disastrous effects of dampness and mildew to the valuable materials of an ephemeral nature stored in the archive have been halted by the use of dehumidifiers, constantly kept running. A new system has been designed by William Maine of G. M. Refrigeration that will maintain the criteria for archival storage, museums and libraries, which is a temperature of 68 to 72 degrees with 40% to 55% relative humidity and eight to twelve air changes per hour for ventilation. Faced with a major equipment breakdown, the Society had no option but to contract to replace the system regardless of budgetary constraints and the lack of necessary funds. Fortunately, a benefactor came forward "just in the nick of time" with a major contribution which will allow for the completion of the project.

### Climatization Equipment and a New Garden

Thanks to a major contribution from Society member Mrs. Sarah Davol Test, the new equipment necessary to maintain the proper climatic conditions in the archive has been ordered and is in the process of being installed. For her generosity at such a crucial time, the Society is extremely grateful.

In addition to the above gift, Mrs. Test has also donated the funding necessary to complete the garden area at the northeast corner of the annex building property. This area will be reached by a walkway from the gazebo gardens and is currently in the design process. The garden will feature walkways paved in bluestone and will be ornamented with carved marble roundels from the old post office building, as well as appropriate cast iron pieces and plantings. The garden will be dedicated in memory of the late Miss Fidelia D. Davol, sister of the donor. A long-time Historical Society officer and director, Miss Davol passed away in 1979.

Salutations to Mrs. Test for her extreme generosity and continued interest in the work of the Fall River Historical Society.

### The Garden Continues to Grow

A major contribution from the estate of the late David A. Brayton, Jr. has recently been received. A life-long member of the Society, long-time director and one of its most generous benefactors, Mr. Brayton passed away on May 6, 2001. Calling

the curator to his hospital room during his last illness, Mr. Brayton discussed his gift and the plans for its use, deciding that it be applied to the completion of the landscaping project with the creation of a garden on the south lawn of the annex building. This area will be reached by ascending the flight of granite steps which lead up from the terrace and is being designed in a style to enhance the existing gardens. Featured among the ornaments will be a lovely set of early twentieth century cast-stone putti representing the four seasons. Construction of the garden will begin in the spring, providing a fitting tribute to the memory of one of the Society's dearest friends.

### School Program Begins Sixth Year

The fifth-grade school program, developed in conjunction with the Fall River School Department and Lafayette Federal Savings Bank, has begun its sixth year. Fears that departmental budget cuts would eliminate the program for the current year were unfounded, much to the delight of all the individuals involved. Once again Bob Kitchen, assisted by Tina Pacheco, are conducting the in-class visits which consist of an illustrated lecture with an accompanying program guide, courtesy of Lafayette Federal Savings Bank. Following the in-class presentation is a visit to the museum, where the students enjoy a guided tour. Special thanks go to Sue Horvitz at the Fall River School Department for all her support and enthusiasm, Barry Bibeau, President of Lafayette Federal Savings Bank and, as always, to Bob and Tina.

### Cemetery Walk A Success

The Oak Grove Cemetery walk organized as a joint effort by the Fall River Garden Club, the Little Theatre and the Historical Society was a decidedly resounding success, generating \$1,900 for each organization. Unfavorable weather caused the event to be cancelled on its scheduled date of September 15th, with the tour being conducted two weeks later. Sunday, September 29th dawned crisp and clear with Mother Nature providing the ideal weather for this much-anticipated event. Nearly 500 "cemetery walkers" enjoyed the tour, fascinated by the costumed actors who, through their skilled interpretations, brought history to life. Thanks go to all those who contributed to the success of this event, especially to Society members Kathy Carey, Cindy Harrington, Claire Melanson and Pat Taylor. Well done!

#### SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- ❖ **Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Binette**, for their generous contribution of \$100, which assisted in offsetting the cost of the Society's October program, The Proper Ladies. It was greatly appreciated.
- ❖ **To all of the individuals** who responded to our appeal for bone china cups and saucers: Nancy Arruda; Claudette Binette; Ruth Brown; Lillian Crawley; Elizabeth B. Dawson; Bruce Derbyshire; Anna Duphiney; Dan Dupuis; Alma Foley; Angelina Gastall; Mary J. Gagnon; Kathering Holleran; Annette Horowitz; Dr. Foster Kay; Dr. & Mrs. William Kenney; Marie Claire Lajoie; Ida Murphy; Dorothy Nicolau; William F. Nuttall; Tina Pacheco; Pauline Pontes; Barbara Raposa; Julie Raposa; Marlene Robinson; Joan Rosario; Sheila Salvo; Mrs. C. Crawford Smith; Pauline Texeira; Doris Thornton; Joan Twaddle. We are extremely grateful for your generosity.

## Fashion Plate

### An Alpacuna Coat

An interesting addition to the costume collection is a gentleman's greatcoat dating to the 1930's and bearing the retailers' label of The Hub, S. Gourse & Sons, Fall River. It is a welcome addition to a collection which contains disproportionately few examples of men's attire when compared to the Society's holdings of garments worn by their female counterparts.

The single-breasted coat is cut of generous proportions with full sleeves finished with cuffs of a medium width and two applied patch pockets with wide flaps; it is pieced together using flat fell seams. It is fashioned from charcoal gray alpacuna, a high piled fabric made by blending the fibers of Peruvian alpaca and those of vicuna, a llama-like animal of the Andes Mountains. Due to the great expense of genuine vicuna, an imitation fiber is often substituted, usually that of fine merino wool, and it is uncertain which of the two fibers was used in the weaving of this textile. The resulting fabric is heavy, wiry and extremely warm, partially contradicting the statement woven into the label stitched onto the coat's satin lining bearing the phrase "Warmth Without Weight." The garment is extremely heavy, providing fashionable protection from the North Wind's proverbial fierce blow, none of which would penetrate this woolen armor.

The coat was worn by Ignacy T. Polka who was employed for many years as a textile worker in the Fall River cotton mills. Born in Poland in 1887, the son of Thomas and Zofia (Pochol) Polka, he immigrated to the United States, no doubt attracted by the opportunities for employment and a better life. A resident of the city of Fall River for over sixty years, he was the husband of Sophie (Niemiec) Polka and the father of several children. Proud of his Polish heritage, he was a member of Polish National Alliance Group. He died on January 4, 1984, at the age of ninety-seven.

When in the market for a new coat, perhaps to be worn for "Sunday best", Mr. Polka visited The Hub, one of Fall River's most popular men's clothiers.

Founded in 1929 at 162 Pleasant Street by Simon Gourse, the store was likely a reorganization of one which he had operated at the same location since the turn of the century. A family-run business, Mr. Gourse was assisted by his sons, David and Harry, the latter two gentlemen conducting the business after the death of their father in 1931. One of Fall River's most popular men's clothing shops, The Hub offered its customers a wide range of fashionable attire for all occasions. In 1974, The Hub closed its doors forever, thus ending another chapter in Fall River's once great mercantile history.

An alpacuna coat with a stitched-in label from The Hub is certainly an interesting artifact from the not-too-distant past.

#### !!!WANTED!!!

Individuals to help the Society's Education Committee present programs in the Fall River School System. Members would visit three schools in the fall and spring and present a 45-minute program on the Society. Training will be provided. Any interested individuals should call Bob Kitchen at the Historical Society (508) 679-1071.