SEASONAL READINGS AROUND THE HEARTH
Friday, December 6 at 5 pm

Volunteers in period costume will be reading seasonal stories and poems in the Bement Room for your pleasure. There is no charge for this program; but donations are always greatly appreciated. Join us and get in the holiday spirit by listening to this interesting program.

Included will be The Night Before Christmas and Yes Virginia There is a Santa Claus. Works by Pearl Buck, L. Frank Baum, Robert Frost and Rachel Field will be read. A selection of thank you notes from local soldiers during WWII thanking the town for Christmas presents that were sent to them are also scheduled.

Join us and listen to these and many, many more.

EXHIBITS

For the past two years, Maria Carr, editor of the Museum & Archives “Now & Then” newsletter, has been collecting photographs and information about the numerous plaques, landmarks and monuments in Stockbridge. The exhibit in the downstairs will continue through most of November and highlights a selection of those sites, from fountains and arches to seats and signs. Stop by and see if you recognize these local landmarks.

Starting the last week of November and continuing through the holidays, there will be an exhibit of Nativity scenes in the downstairs lobby. They illustrate the various personal ways people choose to celebrate this seasonal tradition. Anyone who has one that is unique or has an interesting story attached to it and is willing to loan it for the exhibit, contact Barbara Allen no later than Nov 8th – 298-5501 or ballen@cwmars.org

Upstairs throughout the Library the Scott Marshall collection of Nutcrackers will once again be on display.
THE PARSONS’ ELM TREE

Stockbridge, like most New England towns, had many elm trees lining its streets. There was a very impressive elm tree at Bonnie Brae, a Prospect Hill estate formerly owned by Mr. and Mrs. J. Graham Parsons (drawing of the tree at right in the M&A collection). In 1995 it was estimated to be over 200 years old. The Parsons’ family, over the years, painstakingly collected and filed information and newspaper clippings about the tree.

When it was last measured in 1989 by the Stockbridge School of Agriculture, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the tree stood 115 feet high and 120 feet across the crown. Its trunk had a 20 foot circumference at chest height. Mr. Parsons suggested that the tree “seeded itself around the year 1776 in what was then a meadow, a bit below where the Albany-Hartford Road crossed Prospect Hill.”

As with most elm trees, it developed the Dutch elm disease. In 1971 efforts were made to prevent it. In March 1972, the Elm Research Institute of Waldwick, NJ, presented the Parsons with a plaque designating the tree as an “historic elm”. The plaque was originally attached to the base of the tree. Three years later, the Dutch elm disease returned full force. In 1975, just before the tree was to be guest of honor in yet another ceremony, a last-ditch effort to counteract the disease, which had spread through the tree’s crown, trunk and root system, proved successful. On Arbor Day, April 30, 1976, the National Arborist Association and the International Society of Arboriculture granted the elm official “Bicentennial recognition” making it one of just 33 in the country and the only tree in Massachusetts given the honor.

A newspaper article dated Jan. 26, 1995 stated that a recent windstorm split the base of one of the tree’s four main leaders and that its full weight rested on one of the more stable leaders, itself weakened by time and natural forces. Steel cables implanted in the tree over the years to hold it together had snapped under the pressure. Only one last cable kept the huge limb from coming down into the path of vehicles traveling Prospect Hill Road. The article goes on to state that the limb would be removed. On August 25, 1995 strong winds sweeping through parts of Berkshire County toppled one of the main branches of the tree (pictured above left). It was finally taken down leaving a huge stump; but the tree did not give up. It has since sprouted a new elm tree from the stump of the original tree and is flourishing (pictured above right showing the 2 plaques on the ground).

The large plaque (above) reads -- The International Society of Arboriculture and the National Arborist Association jointly recognize this significant tree in this bicentennial year as having lived here during the American Revolutionary period 1776 – 1976.

The small plaque (right) reads -- HISTORIC ELM, Planted in the 1700’s, this tree is hereby designated a historic landmark to be honored and preserved for future generations, ELM RESEARCH INSTITUTE, WALDWICK, NJ 07463.
MEET JOSH

Did you know that the Museum and Archives has an Assistant Curator? For those of you who haven’t visited the M&A on a Saturday, you may not know Josh, so let us introduce him to you.

Joshua Hall grew up in Lee; but his family goes back many generations in the Glendale portion of Stockbridge. He not only staffs the M&A on Saturdays; but fills in for vacations in the summer as well as participating in many of the “Shades” presentations put on by the M&A. Josh has also done some of the exhibits that the M&A puts on display for your pleasure. Josh started as an intern when he was in college in 2002; and in 2005 took the job as Assistant Curator. If you attend the “Readings Around the Hearth” program in December, Josh will be one of the volunteers in period costume giving a reading.

Josh, who has a BA in History and a MA in Military History, teaches History in the Lee Middle and Lee High Schools. He is very interested in Berkshire County History especially Stockbridge History. He has done extensive research on the Glendale section of the town. He is also interested in genealogy, belongs to the SAR, is a member of the Masons and is Master of Stockbridge Grange #295. He is an Eagle Scout and is very involved in scouting on the local level as well as on the state and national levels.

Nearly all queries that come through the M&A regarding genealogy are handled by Josh. If you are interested in genealogy or local history yourself; or just need help in getting started, Josh is there to help you. Next time you are in the library on a Saturday, stop in and meet Josh.

TWO MAIN STREET BRICK HOUSES
6:30 pm in the Bement Room

For those of you who enjoyed our Cemetery Tours in the warmer weather, you will definitely enjoy our winter house program.

From January through April on the first Tuesday of each month speakers will discuss houses in Stockbridge and the people who lived in them. Mark your calendars.

The January 7th presentation, “Two Main Street Brick Houses”, will feature the Field Parsonage and the Merwin House both on Main Street. It will delve into those that lived in the houses and the history of each house. It will also include a house that does not exist anymore (house as yet to be determined).

Each following presentation (Feb. through Apr.) will be announced and feature 2 existing houses and one that no longer exist.

AARON ELSON
On November 9th at 1pm in the Bement Room Aaron Elson will speak on his latest book entitled The Armored Fist, the 712th Tank Battalion in the Second World War. Elson’s father served in the war in the same regiment as Lt. Edward Forrest. Forrest, who was killed in the war, was the fiancé of Dot Cooney who lived on Church Street.

SUNDAY SPEAKER SERIES
Sunday, Nov. 24 at 4pm

Donald L. Robinson, author of Town Meeting: Practicing Democracy in Rural New England, will review the history and the pros and cons of the town meeting form of local government, and examine how democratic self-government functions in the modern context.

MUSEUM & ARCHIVES HOURS
Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9-5, Thursdays 9-1 and Saturdays 9-2
If you plan to spend time researching, it is always a good idea to call (298-5501) to check for availability.