CATHARINE MARIA SEDGWICK

Catharine Maria Sedgwick, the daughter of Theodore Sedgwick and his wife, Pamela (Dwight) Sedgwick, was born in 1789 in Stockbridge. She died in 1867, 150 years ago, and is buried in the Sedgwick Pie in the Stockbridge Cemetery. This year the Catharine Maria Sedgwick Society (CMSS) will celebrate its anniversary with a seminar in Stockbridge from June 7 through June 11.

During her life she was known as one of the famous Berkshire writers along with William Cullen Bryant, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. Catharine played an important role in the emergence of female American authors. Her 20 books and over 150 articles were admired and drew artists and other authors to Stockbridge to meet with her. Although her writings included far-reaching topics, such as Native Americans, prison reform, slavery, travel, and domestic service, she also used local tales and sites, such as Ice Glen, in her works.

Toward the end of the 19th century, Sedgwick’s writing lost favor with the public and with literary critics. It took another century for her to be recognized as an important part of American literature. The CMSS is one of the reasons this is happening.

Some of her works include A New-England Tale (1822), Hope Leslie (1827), Clarence or A Tale of Our Own Times (1830), The Linwoods (1835), and Boy from Mount Rhigi (1848). The Museum & Archives has many early editions of her writings.

LAUREL HILL PARK VISUAL TOUR

Pat Flinn, M&A Volunteer and Recording Secretary for Laurel Hill Association, gave a very informative slide presentation on Laurel Hill Association’s signature property, Laurel Hill Park, on May 23rd at the Library. This well-attended presentation gave an enjoyable walk through the trails on Laurel Hill stopping along the way to view the Rostrum, Butler’s Seat, the Owen’s Bench and the Musgrave Seat without leaving our chairs.

The Laurel Hill Association, founded in 1853, is the oldest existing village improvement society in the United States. The organization’s purpose is to do “such things as shall serve to improve the quality of life and of the environment in the town of Stockbridge.” Activities include maintaining Association properties, planting trees and flowers, and cooperating with town authorities and other organizations for community welfare. (Note -- see box on page 3. LHA was also given the authority by the town to locate and maintain lamp posts in the town in 1868).

The Laurel Hill Association’s complete historical records are housed in the Procter Museum & Archives at the Stockbridge Library.
The two pictures above, from the Museum & Archives photograph collection, are of a parade in the Curtisville section of the town. In the background you can see the Pagenstecher wood pulp mill and row houses that were still standing at that time. The picture is taken from the entrance of Train Hill Road looking north on Interlaken Road (Route 183). There is no indication of when the parade was held or for what occasion.

The pulp mills were abandoned by 1883-85. When the buildings were torn down is unknown. The land where the mill once stood was purchased by Bernard Hoffman in 1917. Bernard was the son of Professor Ferdinand Hoffman, one of the original backers of the mill. Bernard conveyed the property to the Laurel Hill Association in October 1917 and during the 1920’s a small park was created at the site.

The two pictures below, from a private collection, could possibly be the same parade. The date on the float (below left) of April 19, 1775 denotes the battles of Lexington and Concord which were the first military engagements of the Revolutionary War. Anyone have any ideas or information that may help identify what was being celebrated and when?
Cemetery Walk
Saturday, June 3, 2017 at 4 PM
Wheels of Fortune: The Story of Stockbridge Mills
The Museum & Archives’ popular program returns again this year. The first Cemetery Walk will explore the mills that existed in the east, Glendale and Curtisville sections of the town.
Stockbridge was home to many active mills from the 1740s to the 1900s. Join us while we explore the many water-powered industries throughout the town. You’ll be surprised at how many mills were built and what products they made.
The walk starts at the cemetery gate on Main Street and takes an hour. Parking is available at the old Town Hall across from the gate. A $5.00 donation is suggested.
This is the first of four monthly walks, June through September. Each month has a different theme.

SEDGWICK RESERVATION BOULDER
In 1932 (Lily) Lydia Sedgwick presented 230 acres on the west side of Bear Town Mountain to the Laurel Hill Association in memory of her husband, Alexander Sedgwick (1867-1929). Alexander served as president of the Association from 1905 until 1925. The area is referred to as the Sedgwick Reservation and hiking trails lead through it to Laura’s Tower and Ice Glen.
In 1933 it was reported in the Laurel Hill Association’s minutes that Mrs. Sedgwick planned to inscribe a boulder on the trail leading to Laura’s Tower. In the 1934 minutes it was reported that the work had been completed. The boulder is inscribed – THIS MOUNTAIN SIDE IS GIVEN IN MEMORY OF ALEXANDER SEDGWICK TO THE LAUREL HILL ASSOCIATION 1932.
In 2000 the trail was changed making the boulder no longer visible from the new trail. Sadly it was soon forgotten. In 2017 the boulder was once again located and the old trail cleared for hiking.
Access to the trails is from the end of Park Street crossing the Memorial foot bridge. Follow the trail up Bear Town Mountain until you reach the point where the trail splits. The left fork leads to Laura’s Tower and the right fork leads to Ice Glen. At this point the original trail leads off at a right angle to the left (north). The boulder is a short walk on the old trail.

PROCTER MUSEUM & ARCHIVES HOURS
Tuesday 9-8, 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 (298-8190) to check for availability.

The Pittsfield Sun – December 10, 1868
Reporting on the selectmen of the town – “It was also voted, that the Laurel Hill Association may locate and maintain lamp posts at any place in the streets or town squares in the village of Stockbridge, provided the same are so located as to not interfere with the travel of the public.”

Veterans of World War II
(From 1951 Stockbridge Town Report page 11)
“Article 16. To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate a sum not to exceed $300 for Institutional On-Farm Training for Veterans of World War II.”