

FITCHBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY



125 years



May



2022

Looking deeper into Sophia Sawyer's story

Each March, I am given the opportunity to re-examine women's history during Women's History Month. I have learned that you cannot ignore religious communities and ideas if you wish to connect with Fitchburg's early women.

Churches were central to the intellectual and public lives of women in the early 1800's: one of my favorite examples is Fitchburg's Sophia Sawyer. She was born in Fitchburg in 1792 to parents who were poor farmers and ended up being one of the founding mothers of the state of Arkansas. The story of her life intersects with the Cherokee trail of tears, the history of women's education and questions about women's lives in the south and west.

As a girl, she must have been a good student, because her family sent her to Rindge, New Hampshire to live with the family of Reverend Seth Payson. The Harvard-educated Payson was the minister of the town's first church, a well-known speaker and writer, and a state legislator. We don't have a date for when she moved there, but Payson helped her prepared for secondary school: the Female Seminary started by Joseph Emerson in Byfield, Massachusetts. This was the first secondary school of its kind for girls in New England. Emerson had a very intelligent wife and historians say that he became enthusiastic about the education of women because of her example.

Sophia Sawyer graduated from the seminary in 1823 at the rather advanced age of 31. Her studies there may have overlapped with a student named Mary Lyon, who graduated two years earlier, and became famous as the founder of Mt. Holyoke College. In fact, there is a collection related to Joseph Emerson's school in the archives at Mt. Holyoke.

By 1823, Sophia applied to be a missionary and ran primary schools in the missions in what was called the

"Eastern Cherokee Nation" – essentially in Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina and a small corner of Alabama. One of the schools that she taught in was the Brainerd Missionary School in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Another notable woman connected with the school was a young Cherokee woman Catharine Brown. She had graduated a few years before Sophia Sawyer arrived. Catharine Brown was the first Native American woman to see her writings extensively published in her lifetime; Catharine Brown died at only 23 years of age and I have not yet discovered if the two women ever met each other.

(continued on pg. 2)



Looking deeper into Sophia Sawyer's story - continued from pg 1

Sawyer was in the East Cherokee Nation schools till 1835, during what were called “the harrowing days after they were ordered from their homes.” During this time, she had developed a friendship with Cherokee Chief John Ridge and his wife.

Ridge had studied in Wethersfield, Connecticut at a missionary school that educated both Native Americans and Indigenous Hawaiians. While there in Connecticut, Ridge met and married a local young woman from an old New England family, Sarah Bird Northrup. They were the first ever mixed marriage of a Cherokee man to a white woman. He was from a prominent family within the Cherokee and was shocked at how badly he and his new wife were treated by the New Englanders. So, the young couple decided that they would be happier living in the Cherokee Nation, and relocated to Georgia, in the East Cherokee Nation.

However, he was a negotiator and signatory on the 1835 Treaty of New Echota, where the Cherokee agreed to give up their land east of the Mississippi to the U.S. Government. As a result, his life was in danger from Cherokee opposed to the treaty. John and his wife Sarah moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas in an attempt to escape from political enemies, but he was assassinated there by fellow Cherokee in 1839. Much more information on the conflict may be found in Brian Hicks’ 2011 book, *Toward the Setting Sun*.

Meanwhile, Sophia Sawyer had applied to the Missionary society to move to Fayetteville, too, in order to keep teaching the Cherokee children. Some of the New England-based missionaries said that she was inconsistent and impossible to get along with. There are reports about her bad health and what were called her “temperamental attacks.” The disgruntled missionary leaders lobbied for the denial of her request to move and keep teaching. But some of the Cherokee leaders did not agree. They liked her and respected her teaching. So, she was approved to move west soon before John Ridge’s assassination. She ended up living with her friend, his widow Sarah; they lived together for the rest of Sophia’s life. The Sarah Bird Ridge house still exists as a historic monument, though it’s been expanded from when they lived there, when it was a very simple double-room dog-trot log cabin.

When she arrived in Arkansas in 1839, Sophia started a school for the Cherokee youth. In the beginning she offered the only advanced schooling appropriate for

boys, so it was a co-ed school. I discovered a list of the subjects Sophia learned at her Massachusetts school, and it seems similar to what she taught her Cherokee students. They learned reading, Chirography (writing), Arithmetic, Geography, Grammar, Rhetoric, Composition, History, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Intellectual Philosophy, Logic, Education and Theology. There are documents written by her students that describe their course of study at Houghton Library, Harvard University, according to our records. I have not read any of them (yet.)

By 1850, Sophia Sawyer’s seminary was listed in the census as being a school of young women only. Sophia died in 1854, when she was 62 years old. As the founder of the Female Seminary for Cherokee Girls, she is considered one of the founding mothers of Arkansas. According to the Central Arkansas Library System and the Encyclopedia of Arkansas, the seminary was unusual because it provided rigorous education for girls. It also accepted both Cherokee and white students in an era when so-called “mixing of the races” was discouraged. The Seminary closed in 1862, but it is considered an important factor in the later decision to locate the state’s land-grant university, the University of Arkansas (UA) in Fayetteville.

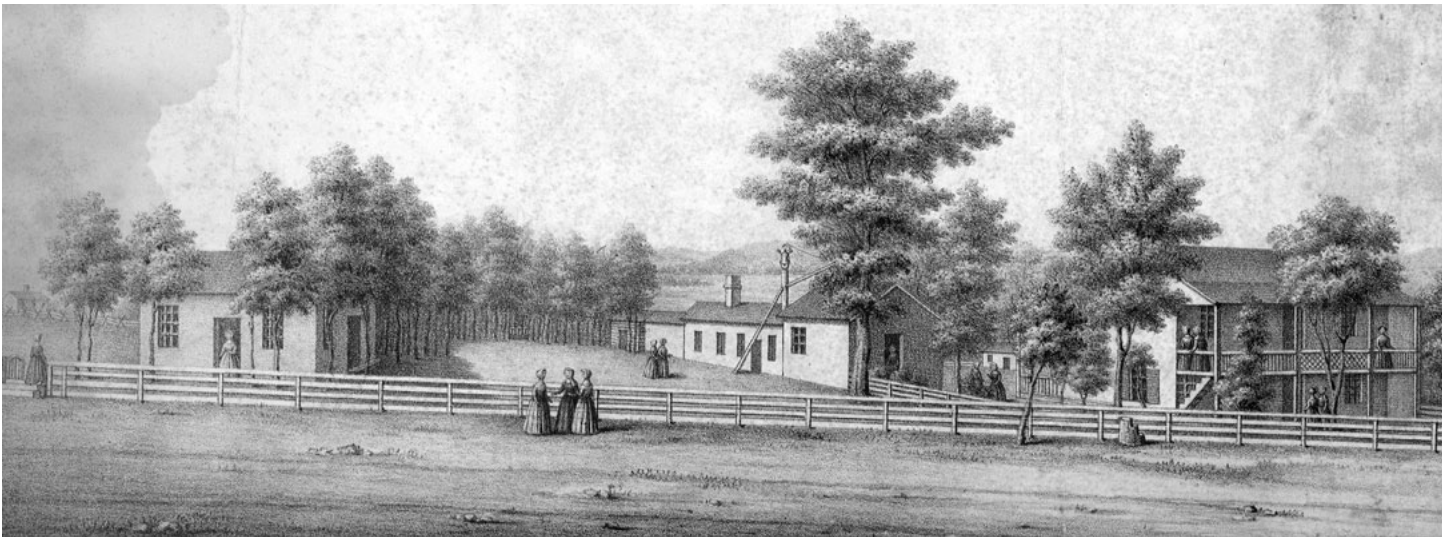
There’s a story from the time before Sawyer left Georgia, that emphasizes her progressive values and determination to stand up for what is right. She was accused of teaching two small boys at her school, who were the children of black people enslaved by the Cherokee. A company of Georgia guard visited her school and threatened to arrest her under a new law that would fine her as much as \$5,000 to teach the children. She would be thrown in jail until the fine was paid. She argued to them that the state laws did not apply to her in the Cherokee nation and that the Cherokees were too civilized to pass any such law. She said she would only stop if the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that she had to. The Georgia soldiers decided not to press the issue anymore: they were probably trying to intimidate her and weren’t ready to arrest her.

Sophia Sawyer’s terrific story shows us that it’s hard to see where the course of history will lead. I’m sure that Sawyer could not imagine the course that local history would take, while she was in the midst of so much political violence and bad behavior by the United States government. But she was by all accounts a talented teacher, who did her best to provide education, affection and opportunity to the Cherokee children navigating their way toward the future.

Reading More

“Soldiers in Petticoats” by Betty Jamerson Reed, Westbow Press, 2019. Reed’s book focuses on three early Christian educators in the Appalachians. One is Fitchburg’s own Sophia Sawyer, born in Fitchburg May 4, 1792 to poor farmers. She ended up becoming one of the ten most famous women in Arkansas history, according to some lists. While still teaching the Cherokee in Georgia, two militiamen showed up at the school door and threatened to arrest Sawyer if she continued teaching black children to read.

Also, Patricia C. Click’s book “Time Full of Trial: The Roanoke Island Freedmen’s Colony, 1862-1867” (published by University of North Carolina Press, 2001) features Mary Burnap, from Fitchburg. She was also a missionary/educator, who worked at a Freedman’s town on Roanoke Island NC during the Civil War.



Hints on Fitchburg’s early residents of color

Every once in a while, we run across brief mentions of Fitchburg’s African-American population in the late 1700’s and early 1800’s. We are trying to keep track of them, for any future historians working on BIPOC history of those early days.

In an article from the Sentinel, May 17, 1910, there is a report on a history talk given at the Historical Society, and a quick note is made about “The Lord’s Barn” (a church that stood in Fitchburg near Westminster from 1788 until 1825.) It was torn down in 1825 or 26 “by Voldostine Johnson, a mulatto from Vermont” who “used a part of the lumber for a wood-choppers’ cabin for himself.”

Presumably, Johnson was building in Fitchburg, or nearby, over the town line. (“Mulatto” is an outdated term, common in the 19th century, for a person who is of mixed ancestry, generally of African ancestry on one side and European ancestry on the other. Today, such a person would generally be referred to as “bi-racial.”) We will keep an eye out for more information about him in our records, along with the stories of other people of color in Fitchburg’s early years.

Fifth Street Bridge

I'm sure you've noticed the unique Fifth Street Bridge at some time or another as you drove through Fitchburg. You can access the bridge from Summer Street, through Harvard Street, past Boylston through Fulton. If you're on the Water Street side of town, you can access the bridge on John T. Centrino Memorial Drive. Otherwise known as the Arthur J. DiTommaso Memorial Bridge, the Fifth Street Bridge is a feat of modern engineering and is actually the second-ever modern twin-tower cable-stayed bridge erected in the state of Massachusetts.

But it wasn't always the same bridge. The Fifth Street Bridge has a long history, starting in 1911. The rapidly developing communities in the Water Street and Summer Street areas hatched a plan to connect their neighborhoods and create quicker, simpler access across the valley formed by the North Branch of the Nashua River and multiple lines of the railroad. Those in favor of the bridge argued that it would help the city expand its already bustling industrial and commercial activities. It would also create a useful connection between the Tar Hill neighborhood (near Harvard and Summer Streets) and the Patch (the Italian neighborhood clustered around Water Street.)

On July 7, 1913, the original Fifth Street Bridge opened to the public. A crowd of 15,000 people came to celebrate the bridge's dedication with a parade. This original bridge was a viaduct, as it was made up of a series of five under-roadbed arched shorter spans and one much larger OVER-roadbed arched span (for height clearance over the rail lines.) It was constructed using riveted steel arched

truss girders, that were then encased in concrete. This system is known as "the Melam System". It's named after the Austrian engineer Josef Melan (1854-1941.)

The bridge was 695 feet long and 40 feet wide overall, with 26 feet of roadbed width. Six arches held the bridge upright with a span of structural steel that weighed 292.5 tons. The steel bars to support the concrete reinforcement weighed 85.5 tons. The workers laid 4,234 cubic yards of concrete and 1,870 yards of paving blocks for the roadway and sidewalks. Two sidewalks line the roadway, spanning 7 feet wide on each side. The sidewalks held 1,378 feet of conduits that held the electric lights to illuminate the span, which were installed by Hubbard Electric Co. of 20 Cushing Street. The bridge's construction cost a total of \$129,495.

Less than one month after the Fifth Street Bridge opened to allow traffic, local contractor Wallace Hutchins noticed crumbling on one of the abutments of the viaduct. The next day, on July 31st, 1913, the Fitchburg City Engineer Fred C. Davis performed an initial inspection and reported that the abutments were not actually crumbling themselves. Instead, it was laitance at the lower step of the support pier; scum had dripped down and coated the abutments with a layer of grime. The layer of grime hardened into laitance and began to chip, making it appear as if the cement from the abutment itself was crumbling.

The following year in January, there was a new concern about the bridge. One morning, F.W. Savage, a chauffeur for the Webber Lumber Company, drove his fully-loaded truck over the bridge and heard an alarming noise. He pulled over to investigate and he discovered four cracks in the bridge's concrete, ranging from 1/2 inch to 2 inches wide. Savage immediately reported his findings to the police, and City Engineer Fred C. Davis and his team were sent out to inspect the bridge once again.

Davis assured residents that the bridge was perfectly safe. These cracks were anticipated in construction and are actually what contractors call "relief cracks." There were four pre-determined locations above or near the bridge's abutments that allowed for the concrete to crack due to the strain of contraction caused by the cold winter weather. Davis asserted that the steel foundation of the bridge had not been weakened in any way. *(continued on pg. 5)*



Fifth St. Bridge

Fifth Street Bridge - continued from pg 4

As the years passed, the Fifth Street Bridge continued to streamline traffic between the Summer Street and Water Street areas. In 1946, a six-ton load limit was established to preserve the bridge's infrastructure. But in 1947, a 50-lb chunk of granite came loose from one of the crossbeams and tumbled down to the road below, crushing the left-rear of a sedan. Thankfully, no one was injured. However, the city learned that it was time for some repairs. Joseph M. Pierce, the Public Works Commissioner promised residents with a complete restructure of the bridge to allow for safe passage once again.



Pictured: 1902 map shows river and railroad before the bridge was built

In 1948 the city closed the bridge for extensive repairs. Fitchburg couldn't afford the expensive cost of the refurbishment on their own, so the City Council transferred jurisdiction of the entire bridge to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. On September 4, National Gunit Corporation of Boston became the contractor for the bridge's repairs, costing \$160,000. The Fifth Street Bridge re-opened in November of 1949 and continued to serve its city for years to come.

The Bemis Road Bridge unfortunately collapsed in 1987, leading more traffic than ever to the Fifth Street Bridge. The city inspected the bridge at this time, and determined it was in good condition and safe to use. Public Works Commissioner Ray Godin promised some light resurfacing and cosmetic work to combat the bridge's ever-forming potholes, cracks, and crumbling bits.

But in 1995 transportation across the Fifth Street Bridge came to a halt. In the early 1990s, the state of Massachusetts began inspecting bridges every two months instead of just once a year. Upon inspection, they found that the erosion of the supports under the bridge made it too dangerous for continued traffic. The District Director of the State Highway Department, Peter Donohue, claimed in November 1995 that contractors at STV Inc of Boston required 18 months to determine a repair plan and two years on top of that to restore the bridge.

However, the timeline was set back again when the state

determined that restoration was impossible and that the Fifth Street Bridge must be demolished and replaced. Our new bridge was to be a rare twin-tower cable-stayed design at 655 feet long and 42 feet wide. It would have two twelve-foot traffic lanes, four-foot shoulders, and five-foot sidewalks. Two pairs of rectangular towers, one pair measuring 140-feet tall and a second pair at 110-feet tall, would form a peak 275 feet above the ground. Fifty-two cables fan out from the towers in a "harp" design. This new structure was estimated to cost \$15 million.

At the time the state announced the new project, officials estimated that the bridge's construction would be completed by the fall of 1999. However, setbacks with a slow demolition process and incomplete designs caused the bridge's opening to be postponed until the spring of 2003. The new bridge was dedicated to Arthur J. DiTommaso, a late Fitchburg police officer who traveled over the Fifth Street Bridge every day to get to work. The only problem was that by the time DiTommaso's memorial was approved by the state legislature and Governor William Weld, the city learned that the bridge was already named 20 years prior.

In 1977, John T. Centrino, a young Fitchburg firefighter, died tragically while fighting a fire on Water Street.

(continued on pg. 6)

Fifth Street Bridge - continued from pg. 5

He and his siblings grew up at the foot of the Fifth Street Bridge, and his family brought an appeal to the city to name the bridge after Centrino in his honor. The City Council approved the name, but it is unclear whether or not they got approval from the State. By the time the mayor and City Council were alerted to this, the Arthur J. DiTommaso Memorial Bridge had become official under Massachusetts law, so it was nearly impossible at that point to reverse the decision.

In order to make things right, the city decided to rename Fifth Street to honor Centrino. Today, what was once Fifth Street is now John T. Centrino Memorial Drive.

The Fifth Street Bridge has changed a lot since it was erected 109 years ago. When that first bridge was erected over the Nashua River to connect Water and Summer Street, transportation in Fitchburg changed forever. Through the years, the bridge saw many refurbishments and even a complete demolition to build something



entirely new. The next time you drive over the Arthur J. DiTommaso Memorial Bridge onto John T. Centrino Memorial Drive, take a moment to stop and consider its rich history.

❧ *Researched and written by Maya Capasso,
with input from Keith Chenot.*

John T. Cetrino *6 April 1943 – 4 March 1977*

On the night of March 4 when the call came in at 2:23 a.m. from the box at Fourth and Water, firefighter John Cetrino, a.k.a. “Bozo”, put on his turn-out gear and ran one hundred yards up Water Street to where the alarm was pulled. Within minutes a second alarm was called for, and the firefighters began clearing the Sabino Block of occupants, setting up ladders and getting the water rigged and flowing. More apparatus came.

Lt. Tom Tiernan was on the front sidewalk with firefighters Cetrino and Mike Orlando. The three were pouring water onto the blaze. Chief Flechtner was overseeing the fire and his men. No one knew that there were explosive gases building up inside the building. Just minutes later, it blew. Firefighters were thrown from ladders, knocked out of windows, and blown down staircases. The front of the building ripped away from the rest and collapsed, sending bricks and beams to the sidewalk. Mike Orlando was blown back against the engine truck, and Tom and Bozo were buried in the rubble. Tom was pulled to safety: a window casing had saved him. John Cetrino was killed

instantly when two I-beams fell on him and many more men were injured.

Chief Flechtner called in a general alarm. It was a conflagration now, and many more men were needed to put it out.

John Cetrino got his nickname “Bozo” as a young boy because he was so good-natured, always smiling and clowning around. He was also very kind and well-liked. The horrific fire and his tragic death stunned the city. He was thirty-four years old, and he left his wife Terry, and two little boys. Today, both of his sons, John and Philip, are firefighters for the Boston Fire Department. John Cetrino died forty-five years ago: the ninth (and last) Fitchburg firefighter to lose his life in the line of duty. He is buried at St. Bernard’s Cemetery.

❧ *Written by Kathleen Flynn, with
additional information from Phil Jordan, Sr.*

Historical Society Photograph Shows Armenian Restaurant

Recently on our Facebook page we posted a photograph of a business scanned from a glass negative. Sharp-eyed readers immediately identified the writing on the window as Armenian, and award-winning local historian George Mirijanian (who is also my uncle!) did some research.

“Google Translate transliterates it as “Haykakan Chasharan,” he wrote. That is not how Armenians who settled in Fitchburg more than 100 years ago would transliterate it. In Western Armenian, which all of the Armenians who settled in Fitchburg spoke, the transliteration and pronunciation would be “Haygagan Jasharan.” “Haygagan” means Armenian, “Jasharan” means restaurant, literally “meal place.” (Jash means “meal” and “aran” means “a place.”) My family spoke colloquial Armenian, which gives us words like “Hokejash” – the meal after a funeral.

It turns out that many Armenians lived or worked on River Street between Circle Street and Kimball Place, starting in the 1890s, in the aftermath of the first Armenian Massacre. My maternal great-grandparents, Mardiros “Martin” and Varteh “Rose” Manooshian were survivors of the 1895 Armenian Massacres in Eastern Turkey and came to Fitchburg before World War I. Mardiros was born in Malatya and Varteh was born in Khapert. Mardiros worked at Parkhill Mills and the family lived in Cleghorn, first at 5 Beech Lane and later at 178 Daniels Street.

And though the River Street neighborhood was never



called “Little Armenia,” numerous businesses thrived. Among business-owners we find: Krikor Havanian (a tailor at 78 River St.), Mugurdich Yarumian (a barber at 82 River St.), and Melkiset Melkisetian (a grocer at 84 River St.; he also worked at the Iver Johnson Arms & Cycle Works).

More Armenians arrived after the Genocide of 1915, and opened businesses, including Star Cleaners, City Cleaners, and Oriental Ispahan Rugs. And though you won’t find an Armenian cafe in Fitchburg, you can get Middle Eastern food at Bion, 356 Main St., Fitchburg (and, of course, at the Greek Festival, which is scheduled for September 17).

*Written by Sally Cragin
with George Mirijanian*

Art talk and Creative workshop *Explore your own story*

Please plan to join us this fall, for “Drawing Our Histories” with Central Massachusetts Women’s Caucus for Art. Award-winning artist Joanne Stowell will give a presentation on her art practice focusing on her daily life as inspiration for her paintings. Attendees are invited to also participate in a creative Drawing Workshop; just bring in an object, or picture of an object, that is meaningful to you. Perfect for beginners, as well as the more advanced. Date To Be Announced, please check Historical Society website and Facebook page. Supported by the Fitchburg Cultural Council, a program of the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

The First Wind Driven Electric Windmill in New England -- Kendall Crocker's Electric Windmill

In 1923, Kendall Crocker purchased and erected an electric windmill on his Jewel hill farm. At that time, electricity on a farm was a luxury that most of rural America did not have and federal government sponsored rural electrification was more than a decade away. Those fortunate enough to have electricity were either close to a city or they used kerosene or gasoline powered electric generators to charge batteries. In the 1920's, only a handful of companies manufactured electric windmills. It was a very new technology. An article in the August 18th, 1923 issue of the Fitchburg Sentinel described the Crocker electric windmill as "the first wind driven electric windmill in New England." The article's description was sufficient for Michael Werst, a wind electric historian from Manor, Texas to identify the machine as an "Aerolite" manufactured by the Wind Electric Company of Minneapolis, MN (figure). The Aerolite resembled a large water pumping windmill with its 14ft diameter steel-vane wind-wheel mounted on a 62 ft wooden tower. That is where the similarities end. The most distinguishing feature of the Aerolite was the 4" wide leather belt that ran on the perimeter of the wheel connecting it to a generator with a modest peak power of about 1kW. The 32V, DC (direct current) generator would have been used to charge a battery bank (16ea, 2V glass jar batteries) for powering a few light bulbs, a radio and a few farm appliances. 32V DC appliances such as cream separators, sewing machines and refrigerators were available for the modern 1920's American farm. In addition to generating electric power, the Crocker Aerolite was configured to pump water like a conventional windmill so it would have been installed over a well. It is believed that approximately 200 Aerolites were produced between 1915 and 1923. There is one Aerolite known to still exist and it is owned by a private collector.

Mr. Werst's research entails finding photo documentation of the Crocker Aerolite and any other information on the installation and its operation. Several early aerial photos of the Crocker farm have been found showing a tall wooden windmill tower however none have been found with sufficient resolution to properly identify the windmill. It is likely that the Aerolite would have been



removed when the farm was connected to the power grid, possibly in the 1930s or 40s and replaced with a conventional water pumping windmill. Although the odds of locating the Crocker Aerolite are highly improbable, it would undoubtedly be a find of historical significance. Mr. Werst is a retired engineer that writes wind electric articles for the Windmillers' Gazette and is working on a guidebook on American Wind Chargers--1900-1950. He also has a website for early wind electric enthusiasts, Wincharger.com. Email: m.werst@utexas.edu

The Fitchburg Historical Society is often contacted by historians whose work connects them with the history of Fitchburg. We like to share their project with our members, especially because some of you may be able to help historians like Mr. Werst with their search. Our thanks to Mr. Werst for sharing this article with us.

❧ *Written By Michael Werst*

Call for information – Musical Fitchburg

We have received two articles about historic instruments with a Fitchburg connection. If you have a photo or some research that you would like to share with us about musical Fitchburg, please get in touch! Maybe we can put together a special issue that focuses on Fitchburg and its music.

And....let us remind you that the Fitchburg Historical Society is offering a new compact disc for sale that features the Thurston Consort playing music written in and about Fitchburg. The disc was recorded in 2021 and retails for \$15. Thanks to the generosity of the Thurston Consort musicians, all sales benefit the Fitchburg Historical Society.

Give Back with a Bouquet: the Bloomin' 4 Good Program

We are honored and delighted to announce that Hannaford selected the Fitchburg Historical Society to participate for a second time in their Bloomin' 4 Good Program. In order to give back to the community, Hannaford sells Bloomin' 4 Good Bouquets for \$12 each and donates \$1 per bouquet to a local non-profit organization.

This May, the Fitchburg Historical Society will receive a \$1 donation with each purchase of a Bloomin' 4 Good Bouquet marked with a circular red sticker at the Hannaford Store located at
927 Merriam Ave., Twin City Plaza, Leominster MA.

To learn more about the program, please visit Hannaford's website at:
<https://hannaford.bags4mycause.com/bloomin-4-good/>

If you have an anniversary coming up, you need some beautiful Mother's Day decorations, or you simply love both gazing at flowers and supporting your local Historical Society, consider heading to Hannaford at the Twin City Plaza this May to buy a Bloomin' 4 Good Bouquet!



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We will receive a \$1 donation for every
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Fitchburg Historical Society

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Hours of Operation

- Monday & Tuesday 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- Wednesday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
- & by Appointment (978-345-1157)

Our research library is open to the public. We anticipate opening a new exhibition within a few months. As of May 2022, we are requesting that patrons, staff and volunteers continue to wear masks when indoors.

Fitchburg History Featured Again at Massachusetts History Conference

In June, the Massachusetts History Alliance will host a hybrid version of their annual conference, and two of the speakers have a Fitchburg connection. On June 7, 2022, Sally Cragin will speak via Zoom about the new theatrical presentations that she has written and Stratton Players performed, in collaboration with the Fitchburg Historical Society. In addition, Katherine Rye Jewell (a Fitchburg State University professor in Economics, History and Political Science) will speak about her research into the history of college radio stations and her new book from University of North Carolina Press.

In discussing how the project relates to the conference theme, Embracing the New or Unexpected, Sally says, "Stratton Players was the only community theatre in our region to offer LIVE theatre during the pandemic. In spring, 2021, we presented an original theatre piece/walking tour: "Artists and Ancestors" at Fitchburg's historic Forest Hill Cemetery. This production involved more than a dozen

performers, and presented biographical sketches of historic architects, painters, directors, sculptors and poets. This fall, we returned to Forest Hill Cemetery and created an original music/theatre piece set in October, 1861. "Letters From the Front" told the story of the tragedy at Ball's Bluff, an early loss of the Union army. Scenes were set in the town, on the front, and in prison."

Her presentation on June 7 will examine the process of creating these original theatre pieces from letters, historical sources including newspapers, and the process of collaborating with numerous municipal departments to make this original theatre possible.

Historical Society Director Susan Navarre has also presented at the Massachusetts History Conference. In June 2017, she shared the organization's program to engage the community and create a new exhibition on Fitchburg's immigrant history.



***Bill Morey (left) and Mr. Alario, who sold snow cones at
Coggsall Park (as seen here) and Coolidge Park.***

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❧ *Save The Date* ❧

Month of May 2022:

Fitchburg Historical Society chosen as charity to benefit from specially marked flower bouquets, sold at Hannaford's, Twin City Mall.

Saturday, July 2, 6 p.m.

Fitchburg History Trivia champions, Civic Days edition. Tickets: \$25.

Sunday, July 3, 5 – 9 p.m.

Civic Days Open exhibition hours. Closed on Monday, July 4.

Saturday, September 10, 2022, 11:00 a.m.

“Still Chasing the Fire”: Lives of the Civil War Veterans who became Firefighters. History walking tour presented with Stratton Players. A look at Fitchburg's Civil War veterans who became firefighters, including some who fought in the war's most pivotal battles. The Fitchburg Fire Department Honor Guard will join us. Will take place at Forest Hill Cemetery.

Wednesday, September 14, 6 p.m.

Historical Society Annual meeting. Social hour starts at 6 p.m., business meeting at 6:30 p.m.