Operator for the Teeth

Historical Myths, Part II

Conversion of Dennison Building

“Symptoms of Thanksgiving”

Winter Work & Play

Annual Fund

Christmas by Candlelight

Winter Weddings

a member magazine that keeps you coming back
 Tradition! Tradition! 
Old and New Ways to Celebrate

I have always believed that traditions are important—for families, for communities, and for organizations. Here at Old Sturbridge Village we celebrate many traditions throughout the year, but fall and winter bring some of my favorites.

I love Thanksgiving. The air is always crisp and clean at the Village during Thanksgiving weekend, as we bid farewell to fall and welcome the arrival of winter. I find it an especially enjoyable time to walk around outside, and visit with interpreters as they prepare pies at the Freeman Farm and explain to guests why staples we find on our twenty-first century table were prepared for Thanksgiving in the nineteenth century. I love hearing visitors tell me Thanksgiving Day at Old Sturbridge Village has become a family ritual.

Then the next day, I get to “walk off” the feast and observe visitors learning the origins of post-holiday traditions.

In December, we celebrate the arrival of the holidays and the New Year with three weekends of our Christmas by Candlelight program. We invite members to explore the history of Christmas traditions such as hanging stockings and roasting chestnuts. And we hope you will make some family holiday traditions of your own by joining us for Brunch with Santa; arranging a family meal at the Oliver Wight Tavern; or participating in the excitement of the raffle on Members Shopping Weekend, December 5–7, when your gift shop discount increases to 25% to help you with your holiday gift-giving needs. Perhaps you can make a weekend of it by reserving a stay at the Old Sturbridge Inn and Reeder Family Lodges.

Winter here at Old Sturbridge Village is truly a unique experience, and the fun doesn’t stop at the holidays. Be sure to join us for a weekend of Winter Work and Play on January 24 and 25, a re-interpretation of our Fire and Ice program that is less dependent on the weather. In addition to enjoying a sleigh ride, learning about ice cutting, or trying out an 1830s-style sled—weather permitting—you will learn about candle making and fence building, as well as how to preserve and store food during the winter months.

Besides visiting, I hope that you will consider a gift to our Annual Fund. To keep our programs affordable for families—and maintain our staff and buildings—we rely on the generous support of our friends and members. Revenue from admissions makes up less than half of what we need to operate the museum. Your gift in any amount would be most appreciated.

May you enjoy all that the fall and winter seasons bring!
**Grand Father:** Operating for the Teeth

**By Tom Kilbelin, Curator of Mechanical Arts**

Perhaps you have met Mr. Sebre Gustin, Jr., the surgeon-dentist character who periodically appears at the Village, offering to fix your aching tooth. By the 1830s, all the basics of modern dentistry were in place except anesthesia. But thanks to two New England dentists—Horace Wells of Hartford, Connecticut, and William T. G. Morton of Charlestown, Massachusetts—that too became common in general surgery as well as in dentistry in the 1840s. But just who cleaned, drilled, filled, and pulled teeth; made false teeth; and supplemented all that by peddling toothbrushes, pastes, and powders in early New England?

In colonial America, dentistry was often just a sideline to some other calling, but a growing number of young men began working as full-time “operators for the teeth,” as dentistry evolved from an often fragmented, part-time manual trade into a respected, specialized medical profession. However, even into the early 1800s, many country doctors included dental surgery, often limited to extractions, in their general practice. One was Dr. Robert Craige of Leicester, Massachusetts, who was a farmer like his neighbors, as well as an artificer of many talents. Besides pulling teeth and delivering babies he made spinning wheels, table legs, spools, rakes, and hoes. He also ran a cider mill and sharpened saws.

A few European-trained professional dentists could be found in cities, as well as more humble folk who practiced at least some branches of dentistry in addition to a “mechanical” trade. Barbers, the descendants of medieval barber-surgeons, were still sometimes called upon to remove a bad tooth, as were blacksmiths and shoemakers on occasion, though more than one inexpert smith pulled not just the aching tooth but several around it at the same time, along with portions of the jawbone.

Many goldsmiths, silversmiths, and ivory workers made false teeth. Paul Revere, for example, learned cosmetic dentistry from John Baker, an English physician who spent a year in Boston in 1767. When Dr. Joseph Warren was killed at the battle of Bunker Hill, Revere was able to identify the body from the dentures he had made. Similarly, ivory-worker Isaac Greenwood of Providence, Rhode Island, cleaned and “inragnified” teeth, and made artificial teeth as well as umbrellas and toothbrushes. His son John became a successful dentist and made George Washington’s favorite dentures.

By the 1800s larger towns had at least a few full-time dentists, including Worcester, Massachusetts, where Dr. Oliver Hunter Blood, a Harvard-trained physician, specialized in dentistry, as did Mr. Seth P. Miller, a surgeon dentist who offered a full line of dental services, including gold, tin, and “soft paste” (amalgam) fillings, as well as orthodontia.

But most people still lived in the countryside where—thanks to more and better roads—inerant dentists became increasingly common. They typically took up temporary residence in a tavern, advertising their services in newspapers and on posted notices. For example, Sebre Gustin, Jr., of Chelsea, Vermont, whose advertisement is in the OSV collection, offered to perform “cleaning, filling and insertion of artificial teeth” as well as an early form of root canal, either in his hotel room or in the patient’s home. Similarly, when New York dentist Dr. Latimer set up office in Thomas’s Coffee House in Worcester in 1832, he generously declared, “those who are unable to pay will be attended to gratis.” This act of charity built good will, promoted word-of-mouth advertising, and gave the good doctor practice with more challenging cases.

Like tinkers, peddlers, actors, and popular lecturers, these traveling dentists saw their occupation as a practical but temporary way to make a living. Joseph Moore of Ware, Massachusetts, was an itinerant dentist in the warmer months, but spent his winters at home making hats. Joseph Moore of Ware, Massachusetts, was an itinerant dentist in the warmer months, but spent his winters at home making hats.

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Preparing the Feast

“Symptoms of Thanksgiving” By Ryan Beckman, Assistant Coordinator of Households.

The days leading up to Thanksgiving were filled with planning and preparation for balls, parties, and weddings, as well as the great feast itself. Families, in anticipation of the holiday, would travel to their country store in search of loaf sugar, molasses, lemons, raisins, spices, and spirits. Housewives and their daughters would then prepare mincemeat filling for pies weeks in advance so that the sugar, spices, and spirits could take time to preserve the rich filling as well as enhance its flavor. The ladies would then host multiple days of extra baking in the household oven to make the myriad pies, breads, and cakes that graced the Thanksgiving Day table. Pumpkins, apples, pears, and chicken pies were universal Thanksgiving Day staples to be eaten with the meal, as was the now somewhat forgotten Marlborough Pudding, an apple and lemon custard pie that many families excitedly looked forward to each year.

The extra wood the ladies of the house would require for the additional cooking and baking. The men would then perhaps purchase a turkey from a drover traveling through town on foot with dozens of noisy fowl in tow, to be the centerpiece of the feast. At the same time of the year the harvest was hauled into the house and stored away. The root vegetables were buried in sand in barrels, potatoes were carefully set into bins, apples were packed away, and cabbages were hung—all in the root cellar. The garret, the kitchen, and the extra wood the ladies of the house would require for the additional cooking and baking. The men would then perhaps purchase a turkey from a drover traveling through town on foot with dozens of noisy fowl in tow, to be the centerpiece of the feast. At the same time of the year the harvest was hauled into the house and stored away. The root vegetables were buried in sand in barrels, potatoes were carefully set into bins, apples were packed away, and cabbages were hung—all in the root cellar. The garret, the kitchen, and stores, and meats, sauces, and gravies were prepared. Vegetables in various states of mash, dripping with butter or cream, were put into the nicest of dishes, and pickles, cheese, and nuts were all set out about the parlor wherever they could fit. Later they would join the plethora of meats and baked items on the resplendent Thanksgiving Day table. Here at Old Sturbridge Village you will see our costumed historians demonstrating the preparation of the Thanksgiving Day meal in several of our households during the month of November as well as on Thanksgiving Day itself. Not to mention the cooking of the leftovers in the days after the holiday! We invite you and your family to visit and explore how nineteenth century New Englanders prepared for one of their biggest holidays of the year. We also invite you to come and participate in some of our upcoming Crafts at Close Range workshops to begin your own holiday preparations! See below for details.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving! ✦

Over the river, and through the wood, Now Grandmother’s cap I spy, Hurra for the fun! Is the pudding done?, Hurra for the pumpkin pie!

crafted by Ryan Beckman, Assistant Coordinator of Households.

SYMPTOMS OF THANKSGIVING

The harvesting of pumpkins—the gobbling of turkeys and fattening of pigs—the buying and selling of eggs—a moderate rise in the price of molasses and spices—an increased demand for lace, ribbons & dancing pumps—the hurrying of tailors, milliners and mantuamakers—frequent and important consultations of young gentleman—whispering, flushed faces, and anxious looks among young ladies—an increase of publications—a saving of weddings, that may safely be postponed—a great feast itself. Families, in anticipation of the holiday, would travel to their country store in search of loaf sugar, molasses, lemons, raisins, spices, and spirits. Housewives and their daughters would then prepare mincemeat filling for pies weeks in advance so that the sugar, spices, and spirits could take time to preserve the rich filling as well as enhance its flavor. The ladies would then host multiple days of extra baking in the household oven to make the myriad pies, breads, and cakes that graced the Thanksgiving Day table. Pumpkins, apples, pears, and chicken pies were universal Thanksgiving Day staples to be eaten with the meal, as was the now somewhat forgotten Marlborough Pudding, an apple and lemon custard pie that many families excitedly looked forward to each year.

Fathers and sons would busy themselves chopping the extra wood the ladies of the house would require for the additional cooking and baking. The men would then perhaps purchase a turkey from a drover traveling through town on foot with dozens of noisy fowl in tow, to be the centerpiece of the feast. At the same time of the year the harvest was hauled into the house and stored away. The root vegetables were buried in sand in barrels, potatoes were carefully set into bins, apples were packed away, and cabbages were hung—all in the root cellar. The garret, the kitchen, and stores, and meats, sauces, and gravies were prepared. Vegetables in various states of mash, dripping with butter or cream, were put into the nicest of dishes, and pickles, cheese, and nuts were all set out about the parlor wherever they could fit. Later they would join the plethora of meats and baked items on the resplendent Thanksgiving Day table. Here at Old Sturbridge Village you will see our costumed historians demonstrating the preparation of the Thanksgiving Day meal in several of our households during the month of November as well as on Thanksgiving Day itself. Not to mention the cooking of the leftovers in the days after the holiday! We invite you and your family to visit and explore how nineteenth century New Englanders prepared for one of their biggest holidays of the year. We also invite you to come and participate in some of our upcoming Crafts at Close Range workshops to begin your own holiday preparations! See below for details.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving! ✦
Part II Five Historical “Myths”

Often Heard at History Museums

By Tom Kelleher, Curator of Mechanical Arts

Many bits of “common knowledge” are true for a particular time or place, but some get exaggerated or applied too broadly. Others are just plain wrong! In our last issue we talked about five frequently heard by OSV interpreters. Here are five more.

Old houses had no closets to avoid the “closet tax” and few windows to avoid the “window tax.”

Property taxes were common in early America but there were not separate assessments on the number of closets, windows, floors, or doors in a home. England, Spain, and other European countries, however, once did tax windows as a reflection of house value.

In addition, while many early homes did have built-in cupboards, “clothes closets” as we know them did not exist. In 1828 Noah Webster defined “closet” as “1. A small room for retirement; any room for privacy. . . . 2. An apartment for curiosities or valuable things.” While old hangers may have been invented by that time—the identity of their creator has been lost in history—but in our time period New Englanders folded their clothing and stored it in chests, or hung it on pegs.

“They” burned down houses to get nails.

In one place and time, this seems to have happened, but that place was not New England, that time was not the 1830s, and the reason is not as silly as it sounds. In 1644-45 colonial Virginia enacted a law prohibiting burning unoccupied buildings to recover nails, primarily to prevent people from destroying another person’s property to recover scrap—akin to thieves stripping copper pipes and wires out of vacant buildings today. Laws makers also wanted to prevent fires that could spread; inhibit colonists from moving; and protect valuable property. They even offered to pay rightful property owners—on request—the assessed value of the nails in their unwanted buildings. Few took advantage of the law, but it worked: the burnings largely stopped.

Children all served seven-year apprenticeships.

Only a small percentage of children were apprenticed in the early 1800s. The “seven years” comes from England’s 1563 Statute of Artificers, which tried to lengthen some apprenticeships to boost the quality and reputation of English goods abroad. Neither the Statute of Artificers nor the medieval guild system it regulated took hold in America, however. Here apprenticeships were molded more by social and economic circumstances. Apprenticeships were “juvenile contracts” between a master craftsman and a child’s parents, ending when a boy turned 21 or a girl 18. Thus the length of apprenticeship depended upon when it began. In the early 1800s, most lasted from one to three years. By then the old apprentice system was dying out anyway, and becoming just a way to exploit child labor.

People did not bathe “back then.”

Most early New Englanders did not bathe; certainly not as thoroughly as we do today. Without hot running water or much privacy, baths were just not practical. Until the late 1700s most Americans washed no more than what showed—hands, faces, and necks—using a basin of cold water and a coarse cloth in the kitchen, or by the well. At that point, cultivated people began to wash themselves completely, in the privacy of their bedchambers, with basins of water and towels—what we call a sponge bath—or with coarse dry towels or brushes to scrub their skin “until it glowed.” Cleanliness slowly spread from the wealthy to the middle class, from city to village, and eventually from village to farm, and by the 1830s bathing was widely promoted by advice books.

Quilts were used to signal runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad.

This is classic “fakelore”: an appealing but invented story used to capture the imagination and consumer dollars. According to this late twentieth century myth, patterns in patchwork quilts were used to convey messages to escaping slaves. However, the imagined and often contradictory “quilt code” is simply incompatible with documented evidence of the Underground Railroad, slave living conditions, quilt making, and African culture, and accredited historians have universally branded the “code” as a modern fabrication (pun intended).

The “quilt code” was first mentioned in a brief, uncited statement in a 1987 video, and then in a 1993 novel for children, where the heroine makes a quilt containing a map to escape from slavery. The myth took hold when a California retiree used her own version of a “code” to sell quilts in a South Carolina tourist mall. One of her customers unsuccessfully pressed her for details, yet went on to write a book explaining the “code” in 2000. It was enthusiastically but naively promoted by Oprah Winfrey, quilt shop owners, antique dealers, and elementary schoolteachers, and the author’s family made a fortune lecturing on it and selling related merchandise.
**A Family Tradition in the Making: Christmas by Candlelight**

By Jim O’Brien, Coordinator of Special Events

Imagining a winter without Christmas traditions and family celebrations, a bitter cold time of year when each day was no different than every other winter day. This was the reality that faced many rural New England communities in the early nineteenth century. While the Grinch in the Dr. Seuss classic tale would be very happy to embrace that scenario, we at Old Sturbridge Village choose to celebrate the season and embrace its history and traditions. Join us as we explore the beginnings of the New England Christmas heritage and transform our village into a magical winter wonderland.

Through our Christmas by Candlelight program—Friday through Sunday nights the first three weeks of December—we invite you to discover the history behind the many traditions that we have come to associate with Christmas. While the modern world is busy preparing to celebrate the holidays, Old Sturbridge Village offers the opportunity to step back from the hustle and stress of the season; to travel back to a quieter time and celebrate the origins of those early Christmas practices that we have come to know and cherish.

Your journey begins in the Visitor Center, where you will have the opportunity to don nineteenth century capes, hop into an antique sleigh, and create a unique family holiday portrait that may draw out the singer in you. In our modern world, the threat of adverse weather makes holiday portrait that may draw out the singer in you. In our modern world, the threat of adverse weather makes us think twice about venturing away from home, but in the early New England communities in the early nineteenth century, dirt roads made travel much easier than in other seasons. And although James L. Pierpont wrote the most well-known and commonly sung American Christmas song called “One Horse Open Sleigh,” the pleasant tune is one of the many traditions that we have come to associate with Christmas.

The sweet smells of ginger and candy will then draw you to our Gingerbread House Competition, where you may vote in our annual contest. For centuries both hard and soft versions of gingerbread were baked throughout Europe, and in the German town of Nuremberg ornately decorated gingerbread was sold at Christmas festivals. It could be said that it was the first Christmas cookie and—like the holiday itself—eventually it found its way to America.

In the village proper, the aroma of roasting chestnuts will draw you into the Small House, where they really will be roasting on an open fire. Chestnuts were common in early New England and were used for stuffing turkey and fowl foods that are usually associated with holiday feasts. The addition of chestnuts to the recipes elevated the dish to the level of a “status food,” due to the amount of labor it took to prepare the chestnuts.

Other holiday treats you might encounter during your visit are fruitcake and hot mulled cider. While the modern fruitcake is the subject of many jokes, the early version was something quite different. Fruitcake was a baked version of plum pudding, a dish that was long associated with many festive occasions. The candied citron, raisins, many spices, and sugar were expensive ingredients, and the labor involved in its preparation assured its connection with weddings, holidays, and other special occasions. Liquid refreshment was also part of the celebration. Traditional wassail, which translates to “a wish for good health,” refers to a drink of hot spiced wine or ale used for drinking “healths” on Christmas, New Year’s, and Twelfth Night. The libation contained the popular seasonings of nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, and lemon, and could also be enriched with cream or eggs. Small roasted apples—and sometimes toasted bread—were floated on the beverage as well. The tradition of floating toasted bread on the drink is where we get the term “toasting,” to replace the tradition of drinking “healths.” While Americans did adopt the tradition of “making a toast,” the wassail never became common here.

You will also discover the history of iconic traditions such as yule logs and mistletoe. Yule logs date back to the days of the Druids, who burned carefully selected wood to celebrate the sun during the depths of winter, whereas our version is a log with three wreathed candles as described in the 1837 English Book of Christmas. Ancient Europeans also revered mistletoe, believing that the plant had magical powers of life and fertility. The Druids decorated their houses with it, and while we are familiar with the tradition of “kissing under the mistletoe,” the romance goes away when you realize the literal translation of mistletoe is “dang on a stick.”

The poinsettia made its first appearance in America in 1828, when our first minister to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett, introduced the plant to us. It is said that since the eighteenth century Mexicans thought the plant was symbolic of the Star of Bethlehem, and today it is America’s best-selling potted plant.

As Christmas by Candlelight decorations include festive wreaths and a variety of Christmas trees throughout the homes and buildings, including a representation of the very first Christmas tree brought into New England. That tree was originally in the home of German immigrant and Harvard professor Charles Follen in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He hung toys, candies, and candles on a tabletop evergreen and then let the children pick off the treats. The candles would be lit, the family assembled, everyone would “ooh” and “ah,” and then they would be quickly extinguished, similar to candles on a birthday cake today.

While the exchanging of gifts is part of our...
modern celebration of Christmas, in early New England gift exchange usually took place around New Year’s Day. However, the hanging of stockings by the chimney—a European tradition that goes back almost 400 years—derivates from the Dutch story of Saint Nicholas, who traveled by horse at night and placed treats in the wooden shoes of children who left them outside their doors. As traditions developed, the shoes became stockings, and the treat that might be found in them included oranges, sweet treats, small toys such as Jacob’s ladders, and books.

Children of all ages will delight in viewing “Little Town of Bethlehem,” an awe-inspiring Nativity diorama that occupies an entire building. Displays depicting the birth of Jesus date back many centuries, and while early Nativities contained live animals, that tradition was soon replaced by carved figures made from wood, coral, ivory, and alabaster, all very expensive materials. By the 1800s these figures began to be mass-produced in plaster, wood, ceramic, and later in plastic, making Nativity scenes more affordable and common.

It wouldn’t be Christmas without a nod toward two authors who helped shape our vision of the traditional Christmas—Charles Dickens and Clement C. Moore—and they are not forgotten at Christmas by Candlelight. In one of our barns, you can transport yourself back in all of its preparations. In Dickens’s of our houses you can see Mrs. Cratchit’s dinner, described in the same story. Clement C. Moore’s A Visit contains live animals, that tradition was soon replaced by carved figures made from wood, coral, ivory, and alabaster, all very expensive materials. By the 1800s these figures began to be mass-produced in plaster, wood, ceramic, and later in plastic, making Nativity scenes more affordable and common.

It was Moore’s descriptive poem—paired with an illustration by Thomas Nast—that helped create the modern image of Santa.

For more information, to purchase tickets for Christmas by Candlelight, or to view a schedule of performances and activities, please visit our website www.osv.org.

A Message to Our Loyal Members and Friends
By Jim Donahue, President and CEO

The phrase “that was worth the price of admission” is often used pejoratively but at Old Sturbridge Village, the Trustees and management take the price of admission very seriously. We consider the museum to be a family place; somewhere that young, old, and in between come multiple times a year to take advantage of the variety of programs that appeal to them. In this economy, the choices for many families are limited, and we are committed to offering access to everyone at an affordable price.

We have the honor of being distinguished as “the largest living history museum in New England.” As such we offer—and many folks take advantage of—two-day admission for one price. Currently that is $24 for adults and $8 for children ages 3-17. On its face, that’s pretty expensive for a family of four or five, but it’s less than what some museums charge for one day, and substantially less than the cost of two days at other museums.

Although our budget is reliant on gate revenue, the weather makes that income unreliable; rain, snow, and cold keep visitors away. Even if we had ideal weather, however, like most museums, admission revenue does not cover operating costs; in our case, revenue from admissions makes up less than half of what we need to operate the museum. Thus the only way that Old Sturbridge Village can remain viable is to depend on you, our loyal members and friends, who contribute to the Annual Fund and the special appeals that we make throughout the year.

As is true for all businesses, our major expense is staffing. Most of that staff is invisible to guests—housekeepers, plumbers, electricians, and carpenters who strive to maintain facilities and grounds you see at the Visitor Center; those who sell you snacks and souvenirs; and—of course—our costumed historians. We know from hearing from members that the costumed historians are the biggest asset of the museum, and we do all we can to maintain the numbers of staff who interact with visitors each day. Many of them have college degrees in history or related fields, yet are paid less than what we consider to be a living wage. The number of self-guided museums in the area is huge, and visitors told us that is not what Old Sturbridge Village is or should be.

Gradually we have been adding staff as funds allow. At the same time, however, our aging buildings and mechanical systems require constant upkeep and repair. That we reached out with special appeals to restore the grateful for your generous response to all of those asks.

A strong Annual Fund will allow us to address the maintenance schedule for our more than 200 acres and almost 100 buildings—about half of which are antique—along with other Christmas classics from the Gospel to Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.

A strong Annual Fund will allow us to address the maintenance schedule for our more than 200 acres and almost 100 buildings—about half of which are antique—along with other Christmas classics from the Gospel to Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.
Today, we consider a family of five or six children large but in the early nineteenth century it would have been common; a few generations before that, it wouldn’t have been uncommon to have eight or more! And in the early 1800s views of children were changing—there was an increasing awareness of childhood as a distinct developmental stage between infancy and adulthood. Last fall, Old Sturbridge Village explored the rich and varied lives of children in New England through their toys, clothes, portraits, and diaries in an exhibit titled, *A Child’s World*.

Running a rural nineteenth century household required a lot of work, and children were expected to do their share. Young girls and boys—even as young as two or three—were expected to help with the cleaning, simple kitchen chores, and other easy tasks. As they grew older, children took on a greater share of the household duties. Girls were primarily responsible for household and garden work, and often cared for their younger siblings. Boys helped with farm chores and heavier work such as chopping wood. Though children of wealthier families may have had fewer chores, they were still expected to help with household duties.

Yet nineteenth century children still had ample time for fun, and many toys that were popular in the nineteenth century will still be familiar to children today—jack-in-the-boxes, dolls, toy swords, toy animals, and tops. Girls hosted “tea parties” with their dolls, while boys played “soldier.” Board games were popular, along with card games and conundrums—word puzzles. Outdoor games such as marbles, running hoops, and French and English (tug-of-war), along with sledding, skating, and even just walking, were popular.

The most common toys in rural New England households were simple handmade playthings—a rag baby doll, a roughly carved team of oxen or block houses, or a simple game of Fox and Greese carved into a scrap of wood. Commercially made toys—many imported from Europe or England—were available though, including fashion dolls, miniature furniture, ceramic tea and dinner sets, and elaborate building block sets for those families that could afford to buy them.

While the life of a nineteenth century child was vastly different from a child’s life today, there are still many similarities. Parents loved and cared for their children, worried about their well-being, and had high hopes for their future. Children did chores, played with toys and games, went to school, and looked forward to being “grown up.” But, as Lucy Larcom wrote in *A New England Girlhood* (1889), “childhood should live on in us forever.”

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### A New Home

Old Sturbridge Village constructed this red-brick building—a copy of an 1849 schoolhouse on Dennison Lane, in neighboring Southbridge, Massachusetts—on the Common in 1946. In 1963, it was moved to its current location—next to the playground and across from the Hands on Crafts Center—to make space for the Thompson Bank. Over the years it has served many purposes, most recently as an informal performance space for puppet shows, music, and nineteenth century character performances and stories.

When the Village opened in June 1946, the Dennison Building held an exhibition of antique toys, which means that the building now has come full circle in its varied life!
The annual bustle of plowing, planting, cultivating, and harvesting is completed. The root cellar is festooned with cabbages and onions hanging over bins of carrots, beets, apples, and potatoes. A dozen barrels of cider are slowly hardening off beside them. The barn is filled with hay laboriously cut, cured, and carried back in the heat of July. Cows, now dried off, low contentedly in the barn. A merry fire takes off the chill as it crackles invitingly on the broad hearth and bathes the dim room with soft, warm light. A hot ember is snatched to light a relaxing pipe. Winter has again come to New England.

With the harvest in and the hours of available daylight in which to work dramatically reduced, winter in the country was a time of relative ease, yet there was plenty of work to do on a farm. And physical activity along with many layers of clothing helped to keep one warm. As Harriet Beecher Stowe observed, "There was always something exhilarating about those extremely cold days, when a very forest of logs, heaped up and burning in the great chimney, could not warm the other side of the kitchen."

For one thing, cordwood had to be brought in. Many a winter’s day was spent felling, limbing, sledding, chopping, splitting, and stacking wood. Mrs. Stowe was not exaggerating about that “very forest of logs.” Deep and wide, kitchen hearths had a voracious appetite for fuel. Since wood fires burned throughout the year for cooking and cleaning—not just for chasing away winter’s chill—the average farm might consume 20 cords of wood or more annually. Imagine the Small House packed floor to ceiling with wood; that is how much wood a typical 1830s farm family burned in a year.

Many farmers cut more than they needed, selling the surplus to mechanics, merchants, and professionals, as well as to a growing number of factory workers. Farmers also cut a considerable amount to split into fence posts and rails, and brought logs to neighborhood sawmills to be cut into boards and beams for new buildings or to repair old ones. Conveniently, snow smoothed the way, frozen ground gave access to swampy woodlots, and ice turned ponds and rivers from obstacles into shortcuts. In about 1820, teenager Minerva Mayo of Orange, Massachusetts, lyrically observed, "‘Tis snow that helps the farmers sleigh / To glide from port to port with ease / It helps the merchant on his way / O’er ponds and lakes and distant seas / ... / It conveys fuel to our fire / It hides the rocky barren land / It fills our souls with new desires / And makes our fields with joy expand."

Winter was also the time to butcher pigs and surplus cattle. The cold air helped preserve meat until it could be cured or consumed, and eliminated flies whose larvae (maggots) might contaminate it. Early winter meat harvesting also removed the trouble and expense of feeding as many livestock through the winter. After being butchered into hams, bacon, and roasts, much of the meat was soaked in brine to preserve it, and some was slowly smoked to give it a protective coating of creosote.

Now dried, summer-harvested rye and oats as well as the corn husked in the fall, were flailed to separate the seeds from the stalks or ears. More progressive farmers—such as Salem Towne—may have used a more-efficient shelling machine. Then the grain was winnowed to remove the useless chaff, either by tossing it in the air with a broad winnowing basket or by using a hand-cranked fanning mill.

Then there were tools to repair for the coming year; fence posts and rails to make; livestock to feed and water; firewood to carry in; the usual chores of cooking, cleaning, and laundry; and all that tangy hard cider to rack off into clean barrels and bottles. All that work does create quite a thirst, and all that cider wasn’t needed for the coming year.

For children, winter was the time for school. Neighborhood district schools in early New England met for two three-month terms, summer and winter. The summer term was mostly attended by younger children, as much to keep them out from underfoot at home in the busy summer farm season as for their education. But reduced demand...
for farm labor at home meant that the winter school term was much more heavily attended. Without restrictive grades or graduation, sometimes young adults in their late teens or even twenties sat beside four-year-old “ABC darers.”

Winter work aside, this was also the season for old and young to play; a time for youths to court; and families to visit. Children—then as now—loved to play in the snow; making snow statues (snowmen), sledding, or taking “a slide on the ice,” with or without skates. Adolescents and young adults made the most of opportunities to court, including organizing sleighing parties and balls, often combining the two as a convenient and convivial means to get to and from the dance. To prepare for impressing the opposite sex at a ball—and to meet potential partners—many singles enrolled in evening dancing schools organized by itinerant dancing masters. As apprentice cabinetmaker Edward Jenner Carpenter noted on a January night,

“We had a first rate sleigh ride tonight in Joselyn & Eldridge’s new Omnibuss, a picking up the girls for dancing school. We danced considerable with the ladies this evening....”

In villages single young men and women predominated at public lectures and organized debates on winter evenings, often attending as couples. At weekly singing schools, young men and women ostensibly rehearsed for the church choir between shy smiles and flirtatious banter. Married couples also enjoyed sleigh rides, festive suppers, and winter dances. Thanksgiving through early winter was the most popular time for weddings; spring was a close second, after a winter spent courting.

On many a wintry afternoon women gathered their sewing and walked to a neighbor's house to chat as they sipped tea, made and mended, basted and hemmed. According to writings of the time, men, such as Christopher Columbus Baldwin, might “take gun and dog, in company with brother Jonathan, and . . . go a hunting,” more for sport than for food, hoping to find an unlucky squirrel or fox. Less temperate fellows could be found in the barrooms of local taverns late into the night. Both sexes spent time reading, alone or aloud to a group, be it scripture, advice books, novels, newspapers, or magazines. Entries such as, “In the evening, the neighbors call . . . and the time is spent . . . in pleasant conversation” are also frequent in Baldwin’s diary. Anyone who played a musical instrument, had a good singing voice, or could tell a rousing tale was a welcome companion on cold winter nights. Card games—especially whist, an early form of bridge without bidding—as well as checkers, chess, and other board games, were also popular evening pastimes.

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Our partnership with Old Sturbridge Village is a natural fit since both institutions share a commitment to making a difference in the communities we call home. It can’t come to us, we will go to them,” notes Jim Donahue, President and CEO of Old Sturbridge Village. “We want to give children a history lesson they will never forget, and it is only possible with great partners such as The Hanover.”

“The Hanover’s support of the Village is part of a broad charitable contributions program through which we support a wide range of needs in the communities where we live and work,” Luisa notes. In addition to financial support, The Hanover supports employees who are involved as volunteers at countless community organizations. Besides engaging employees in the needs of the community, The Hanover also has volunteer recognition programs and awards grants to organizations supported by individual employees.

“We value our very special and rewarding partnership with Old Sturbridge Village,” adds Luisa. “We are proud to support the Village’s programs, which provide students in Worcester Public Schools with unique and rich educational experiences.”

Stay and Save: Enjoy events both days by adding the Dinner in a Country Village lodging package on Saturday.

Dinner in a Country Village lodging package on Saturday.

Business Partner Profile

The Hanover Insurance Group

By Lorraine Reeder, Marketing Associate

Almost all of us here at the Village have had at least one person tell us, “Oh, I went to Old Sturbridge Village when I was in fifth grade,” and many schools do still send students on field trips here—almost 65,000 students have visited this year. Some of those institutions—mostly Title I schools—are able to send classes thanks to donations to the Village’s Education Fund from individuals, corporations, and foundations. For schools that cannot send students even with that aid, the Village also offers an educational program called “History on the Road.” Costumed historians drive specially equipped—and designed—vehicles to area schools, providing students a hands-on experience in history without leaving their classrooms.

Since 2008 the Village has received significant financial support for both the Education Fund for on-site visits as well as the History on the Road program from The Hanover Insurance Group through The Hanover Insurance Group Foundation. “Our mission is to improve the quality of life in the communities where our companies have a major presence,” explains Jennifer Luisa, Vice President of Community Relations at The Hanover. “We focus our support heavily on helping build strong public schools and encouraging our children and youth to achieve their full potential. Our partnership with Old Sturbridge Village is a natural fit since both institutions share a commitment to making a difference in the communities we call home.”

Old Sturbridge Village began the History on the Road program more than 30 years ago, visiting a multitude of schools in the Central Massachusetts area, impacting thousands of students. “If schools
Old Sturbridge Village is fortunate to have many long-term staff members who have made a lasting impact on the museum and its visitors. Indubitably Thruston “Thruse” Hammer, a member of the OSV family since 1986, is a stellar example. Visitors can always expect a warm hello and informative experience with Thruse, while his fellow staff can expect any baked goods or candy left unattended will fall victim to his incomparable sweet tooth.

Thruse was a member of the class of 1942 at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and a classmate of President George H.W. Bush. He excelled as an athlete at Phillips, playing football, baseball, and hockey, earning the nickname of “Sledge” from one of his coaches. Upon graduation Thruse entered Yale, but put his education on hold in 1944 to help the American war effort. After attending the Notre Dame Midshipman’s School, he was sent to the Pacific where he served as an ensign on LST–1040, a massive tank landing ship involved in the assault and occupation of Okinawa in June 1945.

When he was discharged from the Navy in 1946, Thruse returned to Yale, graduating in 1947 with a degree in history. Nonetheless, he worked for his family’s life insurance company for 17 years before beginning another career in development and community relations for a series of medical facilities in Massachusetts. Upon his retirement in 1986, Thruse became a part-time costumed interpreter at OSV and the rest is … well, history. Like most staff at the museum, Thruse is trained to work in a variety of exhibits, but developed an acute interest in broom making early on. Transitioning to the Lead Interpreter of brooms, Thruse and his brooms have become an iconic part of the visitor experience at OSV.

When asked what part of his work at OSV he enjoys the most, he simply remarked, “It’s impossible to tell.” Whether interacting with visitors from far and wide in various exhibits or teaching his fellow staff how to make a sturdy broom, Thruse enjoys it all and continues to be a valued member of the OSV family. So the next time you visit OSV be sure to look for and spend some time with Thruse … just make sure to bring enough cookies or candy to share! ✫

Winter Weddings at Old Sturbridge Village

For my generation, June was “the” month to get married, but in early New England, Thanksgiving through early winter was the most popular time for weddings. Modern brides are unencumbered by such social pressures and choose wedding dates that suit their dreams and lifestyles, and brides who have chosen winter weddings at Old Sturbridge Village are so happy they did!

While posing for the photographer in front of the Bullard Tavern, Deb and Marc, for example, got into a snowball fight. The photographers at Ericson Wolfe used a shot of that scene for the cover of the couple’s wedding album, to highlight their spontaneous personalities. Candi Wolfe says, “If I am ever tired of the New England snow, I will take a look at this perfect winter night. Lanterns lighting the snowy paths and a deep blue sky created a backdrop to remember!”

Wolfe was also the photographer for Allison and William, who chose a December date for their ceremony in the Center Meetinghouse and reception in the Bullard Tavern. “To spend the holidays with your closest family and friends is so nice,” Wolfe says, “but adding in a warm fire, beautiful flowers, amazing food complete with apple turnovers—and everyone dancing and celebrating—makes it perfect!”

Winter months—particularly January through March—are a quieter time at the Village, which is a plus in many ways. For one, the timing of the event can be more flexible, as the museum hours are shorter. For another, unique options are available: sleigh rides through the snow; hot period libations; romantic fires on the hearth; and value-priced menu packages.

Regardless of the time of year, the Old Sturbridge Village staff personally supervise every on-site detail of each event, from the condition of the walkways to the execution of the menu to the reservations at the Old Sturbridge Inn and Reeder Family Lodges. Wedding couples and their guests can relax and enjoy every moment, knowing that a shuttle will drive everyone safely to the door of their accommodations. ✫
Upcoming Events

Plan Ahead for These Memorable Village Experiences

OSV membership allows you to attend most events at a reduced price, and some events—highlighted in blue—can be enjoyed for FREE!

Christmas by Candlelight
December 5–7, 12–14, 19–21
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings, 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
An enchanted evening of gingerbread, roasted chestnuts, music, dance, and a sleigh ride (weather permitting). Meet Father Christmas and chat with Santa Claus. See article on page 10
Old Sturbridge Village will be closed during the day December 2–25. The Village will return to a daytime schedule for school vacation week, Dec. 26–Jan. 4, 2015.

Member Shopping Days
December 5, 6, 7
These days, the Members Discount is 25% on all non-sale merchandise.

Worcester Chamber Music Society Yuletide Concert
December 11—6:00 p.m.
Cash bar; dinner in the Oliver Wight Tavern (starts at 6:30); performance in the Center Meetinghouse.

Garden Thyme: Growing and Storing Onions
January 17—10:00 a.m.
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 19
Costumed historians will portray 19th-century abolitionist leaders.

Winter Work and Play
January 26–27
See article on page 16

18th Century Camp Craft
February 7–8
See www.osv.org/events

Winterfest/Feburary School Vacation Week
February 14–22
Special events for Washington’s Birthday Celebration February 15–16; see demonstrations of candle making, meat harvesting, and fence building. Sleigh rides and sledding, weather permitting.

Be Mine: Chocolate and Valentines
February 14
Learn more about these two hallmarks of Valentine’s Day celebrations.

Take a Closer Look: Curator’s Tour of A Child’s World
February 14—10:00 a.m.

Antique Sleight Rally
February 21
More than 20 horse-drawn vintage sleighs will compete for prizes in 12 divisions.

Garden Thyme: The Florist is In—Caring for Cut Flowers
February 21—10:00 a.m.

Maples
March 7–8; March 14–15; March 21–22; March 28–29
The smell of wood smoke and maple syrup mean spring is on the way. Join us for any or all of these four weekends.

Crafts at Close Range
November 7–8
Take a Closer Look: Behind-the-Scenes in the OSV Research Library
March 14—10:00 a.m.

Celtic Celebration
March 16–19
Celebrate Irish heritage and learn the role of the Irish in 1830s New England and its impact today.

Home School Day
March 18

7th Annual Garden Symposium
March 21

Garden Thyme: Heirloom Seed Swap
March 28—10:00 a.m.

 Lodging packages are available for most fee-based events, offering additional savings.

For more details on all events, call 800-SEE-1830 or visit www.osv.org

Upcoming Events

Take a Closer Look: A Closer Look at the Bixby House
October 11—10:00 a.m.
Speaker Series: Susie Middleton
October 16—10:00 a.m.
Hear Susie talk about her latest cookbook, Fresh from the Farm: A Year of Recipes and Stories, and get an autograph beforehand. $15 per person ($13 for Members). Doors open at 6:00 p.m.; cash bar available.

From Field to Table Weekend
October 18–19
Watch ovens ploving and preparing fields, help with the harvest; taste heirloom apples; and learn about food preservation methods. The Cider Mill will operate most October weekends.

Garden Thyme: Gardening Indoors
October 18—10:00 a.m.

Collectors! Forum: Bucket Town: Four Generations of Toymaking and Cooperage in Hingham
October 25—9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
David Schorsch, an American antiques consultant, will discuss popular American toys. This program is ideal for scouts toward badges.

An Evening of Illumination
November 8
Special guided tours of select buildings around the Village common, with shops and homes lit by candles, oil lamps, and firelight. Light refreshments, mulled cider, and a cash bar at the Bullard Tavern.

Veterans’ Day
November 11
All veterans—active or retired—and their families (up to six people) receive free admission. Special activities celebrate the nation’s military history.

Scout Day
November 15
For every one scout in uniform one parent gets in for the child rate ($8). Special programs and hands-on studies help scouts earn requirements.

Garden Thyme: Preparing Small Fruits for Winter
November 15—10:00 a.m.

Hearthside Bounty
November 15—6:00 p.m.
Enjoy a 19th-century tavern supper prepared in part at the hearth, and beverages fashionable in early New England; hear music and stories; explore period games and entertainment. $85 per person ($75 for Members)

Thanksgiving Preparations and Celebration
November 1–30
Every weekend in November see historical Thanksgiving preparations, then during the holiday weekend a traditional feast on Thanksgiving Day; an after-Thanksgiving feast buffet at the Oliver Wight Tavern; and a re-created wedding on Saturday. Some activities are fee based.

Sunday Brunch with Santa
Sundays, November 30 to December 21
Call 508-347-0285 to register

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Crafts at Close Range
November 1–2
See article on page 7

Corporate Appreciation Weekend
November 1–2
Complimentary admission for employees of our Business Partners and their immediate families (up to six per employee).

Dinner in a Country Village
November 1—5:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.
REPEATED: November 15; January 3, 10, 17, 24, 31; February 7, 14, 21, 28
March 7, 14, 21, 28
Prepare and eat a meal in the style of early New Englanders in the Parsons; with costumed interpreters overseeing the preparations, all by candlelight. $85 per person ($75 for Members)

Home School Day
November 5
Take a Closer Look: 19th Century Cooperage
November 8–10:00 a.m.

An Evening of Illumination
November 8
Special guided tours of select buildings around the Village common, with shops and homes lit by candles, oil lamps, and firelight. Light refreshments, mulled cider, and a cash bar at the Bullard Tavern.

Tour of Bucket Town
October 18—10:00 a.m.
Special events for Washington’s Birthday Celebration February 15–16; see demonstrations of candle making, meat harvesting, and fence building. Sleigh rides and sledding, weather permitting.

Sleighing on the Trails
February 15–16
Contact the Center Meetinghouse.

Father Christmas and chat with Santa
December 24–25
An enchanted evening of gingerbread, roasted chestnuts, music, dance, and a sleigh ride (weather permitting). Meet Father Christmas and chat with Santa Claus. See article on page 10
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Cash bar; dinner in the Oliver Wight Tavern (starts at 6:30); performance in the Center Meetinghouse.

December School Vacation Week
December 26 to January 6
Crafts, entertainment, and outdoor activities for all ages.

Families Cook
December 28 and February 18
5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Families with children ages 8 and up prepare and eat a complete 19th-century dinner by the hearth, assisted by historically costumed staff. $85 per person ($75 for Members)

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For more details on all events, call 800-SEE-1830 or visit www.osv.org

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Thank you for your support!

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and Overseers of Old Sturbridge Village, we extend our most sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the Old Sturbridge Village Annual Fund this year. Your support is crucial to keeping the Village strong and moving forward with innovative and in-depth programs presented by a knowledgeable and experienced staff.

Although gifts in any amount are welcome year-round, many people send contributions at the end of the year, and we hope that you will also. A donation of as little as $25 per member will give us a solid foundation upon which we can design next year’s programming.

While shopping for holiday gifts, you might consider making a donation to OSV in the name of a loved one for whom you find it difficult to buy presents. It is a tax deduction for you, and the recipient will be happy not to be standing in a department store return line come January!

We wish you a happy holiday season and good health and cheer in the New Year.

Richard G. Schulze, Chair, Board of Trustees

Joan McGrath, Chair, Board of Overseers