



# the Bidwell House museum

Fall/Winter 2017–18

## A Saltbox Revealed

**During the 2016-17 preservation** of the Bidwell House, a portion of the west wall of the ell was found to have extensive rot—several timbers, studs, sheathing, window frames, and siding had to be replaced in-kind with historically correct materials. Although this was not desirable, it had one happy consequence –the joint between the original 1760s Saltbox house and the 1820s ell was exposed! Previously, this joint had been sided over

making it difficult to visualize the shape of the original “saltbox,” a traditional New England style of house with a long sloping roof from the ridge over the two-story front to the one-story back. The exposed 1760s sheathing and timber frame allowed our architects and historic preservation consultants to examine the construction in detail.



Original saltbox frame, roofline and sheathing.

The “shadow” of the original corner board was still visible on the sheathing. With the approval of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, we have replaced the corner board and roof line to reveal the Saltbox shape.



The new roofline revealed near the end of construction!

## A Season of Change



The house and gardens looked beautiful this summer!

**If you have not been to the museum** recently you will likely notice something new the next time you visit! The 2017 season ushered in a series of changes to the museum both inside and out. In April our much-loved Director of the last 7 years, Barbara Palmer, said good-bye to the museum as she moved to the exciting job of Associate Director of Operations at the Williams College Museum of Art. Administrative Manager Heather Kowalski took over the Executive Director position on May 1 and shortly after that hired a seasonal Head Docent/Caretaker, Paul Fuller. Paul lived onsite with his fiancée (now wife) Jenn Kole and was in charge of the interns and tours for the season. Having a seasonal Docent/Caretaker was something new for the museum and proved to be a worthwhile endeavor, as you will see when you read Paul’s seasonal reflections later in the newsletter. On August 31 the museum added another new face when Katie Connell started as the new Administrative Manager. You can read more about Katie later in the newsletter as well.

Seasonal changes were not just limited to the staff! In 2016 the museum embarked on the first phase of an ambitious project to replace the leaky roof, stabilize the structure, insulate the house and update the electrical wiring. With new cedar shingles and a fresh coat of paint the house looks revitalized! The next phase of the project started in October and will improve accessibility to the museum by re-grading the lawn and re-building the porch for a new accessible entrance to the museum. The Museum will also create a video tour of the 2nd floor for our visitors who cannot make it up the steep stairs. Before starting this part of the project the museum was required by the Massachusetts Historical Commission to complete an archeological assessment so in August, the museum hosted a team of archaeologists from UMass Amherst. They spent 5 days on site digging in the dirt and bagged a number of small artifacts. The museum is planning a program for next summer to outline what they found and what it means to the history of the house. Keep an eye on the museum events calendar this spring to learn more!



# A Message From the President

**Thank you!** For a wonderful, successful year at the Bidwell House Museum. With your help and enthusiastic support, we've had an amazing year full of both traditions and new initiatives, restoration and improvements, new staffing and old friends.



The history lecture series and house tours were very well attended and received rave reviews from both long-time residents and first time visitors. Township #1 Day in July reprised many favorites including local musicians, historical exhibits, and yummy food, but added many new features including the Monterey Fire Department's spectacular ladder truck, dump trucks, antique tractors, hay rides on a 1950 farm truck restored by Roger Tryon, and iron forging by Del Martin of the Knox Trail Forge. The Thanksgiving party on November 18 was back at the historic house for the first time in three years, after two years of building restoration and roofing. A crowd of over 90 guests enjoyed the warmth and charm of the party.

Heather Kowalski was appointed Executive Director in in March, succeeding Barbara Palmer who has moved on to the very prestigious Williams College Museum of Art. I'm so happy for Barbara and so grateful to Heather for the smooth transition and great new ideas for the future of the museum

We also had a terrific Resident Docent for the summer, Paul Fuller. You'll find an article in this newsletter with Paul's insights and reflections on his experiences. For 2018, we are planning to expand the Resident Docent position as a Fellowship for Graduate-level students who will do independent research, lead house tours, and work with the Interns. A lecture with the results of the research project will be offered at the end of the season. You can help us fulfill this goal with your contributions.

A crew of Greenagers returned this summer to work on improving the museum's four miles of interpretive trails, building a new cross country ski trail, and constructing a new wigwam for the museum's Native American heritage exhibits. This program was made possible by your contributions and a matching grant from Housatonic Heritage. The museum also led three hikes this fall as part of Housatonic Heritage's program, all of which were very well attended.

Another new youth education program this year was Garden Interns: two young women worked with Ruth Green, the museum's extraordinary head gardener, in the heritage garden, herb garden and flower gardens. We are hoping to continue this new program again in 2018 with your help.

With the house restoration, structural stabilization, re-roofing and repainting completed in 2017, we have now embarked on making the museum accessible. Construction is underway to eliminate steps and provide universal accessibility to the museum's entrance on the porch. This work will be completed in the spring.

The final step in accessibility improvements to the interior of the museum will include accessible rest room, wider doorways for accessibility, and making the carriage barn lecture space accessible. Fundraising and grant-writing for this is underway and we hope to be able to complete the work for the 2019 season.

Although the winter may seem like a quiet time, the museum is buzzing with activity; volunteers and staff are busy planning programs and enrichment for next year; the museum's education task force is working to coordinate our educational programming with current curriculum and plan for school trips in future years.

But for now, I'll close with my thanks to you – our members, supporters, volunteers, and donors – who make this all possible. Best wishes for the holidays and for a splendid 2018!

**—Rob Hoogs, President of the Board of Trustees**

## THANK YOU 2017 Business Partners

- Alarms of Berkshire County
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  - Roger Tryon Stoneworks
  - Shakespeare & Co.
  - Tryon Construction
  - Ward's Nursery
  - Webster Landscaping
  - Wheeler & Taylor
  - Wingate
- Your support funds history education, outreach and more

# Rev. Edward Taylor, the Puritan Poet

*Thy crumb of dust breathes two words from its breast,  
That thou wilt guide its pen to write aright  
To prove thou art, and that thou art the best,  
And shew the properties to shine most bright*

"Edward Taylor's poetry, his prose, indeed his entire life were informed by one central purpose, hammered on one anvil, aimed at one end – a blissful eternity in the Heavenly City, basking in the radiant vision of Christ, singing his praises and glory."

Edward Taylor, often referred to as the Puritan Poet, was born in 1642, in Sketchley, Leicestershire, England, sailed to America in 1668, entered Harvard with advanced standing in July, and received his BA in1671. At the urging of Increase Mather he moved to Westfield, Mass. to serve as their minister, while organizing a church there, a process that took some eight years. The 1676 King Philip's War spared Westfield, but again delayed plans to organize the church. The frontier community of Westfield near the Connecticut River, pleasant though it must have been at times, was afar cry from the Heavenly City whose visions dazzled the poet. On November 5th 1674 he married Elizabeth Fitch of Norwich.

On August 27, 1679 the Westfield congregation finally entered into a church covenant, at which time Taylor was elected pastor. Influenced by Increase Mather, Taylor was a proponent of the Half-Way Covenant, encouraging the baptizing of infant children of church members, but not admitting them to full membership until they were at least fourteen. Soon after being elected pastor Taylor launched his first attack against the Rev. Solomon Stoddard's "liberal" practices in "A Particular Church is God's House." Stoddard, pastor of the Northampton Church, came from a powerful family and was at times referred to as the Pope of Western Mass., disagreed with Taylor over the provision of the Half-Way Covenant, under which no man was permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper until he had certain knowledge and full assurance of his salvation. Without this knowledge, his attendance at the sacrament was damning. But Stoddard insisted that no man could know he was saved with absolute certainty. On June 24, 1729 Edward Taylor died, and by 1750 only four congregations in the Connecticut Valley still held out against Stoddardeanism; Westfield was not among them.

Meanwhile in 1682 at the age of forty Taylor began his major poetic and devotional activity, the Preparatory Meditations, which were composed at monthly intervals for the next forty-four years. Taylor's wife Elizabeth died on July 7, 1689. Edward and Elizabeth had eight children together, five of whom predeceased her. In 1692, at age 50, Taylor married 22-year-old Ruth Wyllys, daughter of a prominent Hartford family.

Ruth Wyllys, was born in 1670 at Westfield, Mass. and was the granddaughter of two Connecticut Governors George Wyllys and John Haynes. Ruth and Edward had six children together, five daughters and a son. Each of the daughters married a man of the cloth: Ruth, b. 1693, married Rev. Benjamin Colton; Naomi,

b. 1695, married Rev. Ebenezer Devotion; Anne, b. 1696, married Rev. Benjamin Lord; Mehitabel, b. 1699, married Rev. William Gager; and Keziah, b. 1702, married Rev. Isaac Stiles.

Edward and Ruth's daughter Ruth married the Rev. Benjamin Colton. The Colton's daughter Theodosia, 1721-1759, married Rev. Adonijah Bidwell 24 October 1752 and set up house with him in Township # 1 (Later Tyringham, now Monterey) Where Rev. Bidwell had organized the church in October 1750.

"Theodosia had the reputation of being a poetess of merit." Unfortunately none of her poetry seems to have survived. Theodosia's death at age 38, on June 8, 1759, after just seven years of marriage, left Rev. Bidwell, a widower, with no children. However, on 16 October 1760 he married Theodosia's first cousin Jemima Devotion, 1727-1771, the daughter of the Rev. Ebenezer and Naomi (Taylor) Devotion, a union that gave them four children, Adonijah, Jr. in 1761, Barnabas in 1763, Jemima in 1765 and Theodosia in 1766.

## Welcoming Katie Connell!



The museum was excited to welcome Katie Connell to the staff on August 31st as the new Administrative Manager. Prior to working at the Bidwell House Museum, Katie was the Assistant Director of the South County History Center in Kingston, Rhode Island and continues to work as an Education Specialist at the Berkshire Museum.

Katie holds a B.A. in Art History and Psychology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst with the hope of continuing her education in Museum Studies. "Katie has been a great addition to the staff of the Bidwell House Museum" notes Heather Kowalski, Executive Director "And her experience with museum education will be incredibly helpful to the museum as we move forward with our education program." Katie grew up in Lenox, MA and loves living in an area full of history. You can find Katie at the museum on Monday, Thursday, and Friday.

The Bidwell House Museum is a New England heritage site providing a personal encounter with history, early American home life, and the Berkshire landscape, through its land, house and collection. The Museum is a non-profit educational institution for the benefit of the community and today's audiences of all ages, dedicated to preservation, scholarship and enjoyment of the landmark site.





Glorious Spring Gardens!



Our new arbor built by the Greenagers!



One of our Township #1 Day attendees had some questions for the Butler's Rangers reenactors.



Del Martin of Knox Trail Forge displays his craft at Township #1 Day



A view of the house with a new roof, new gutters and a fresh coat of paint!



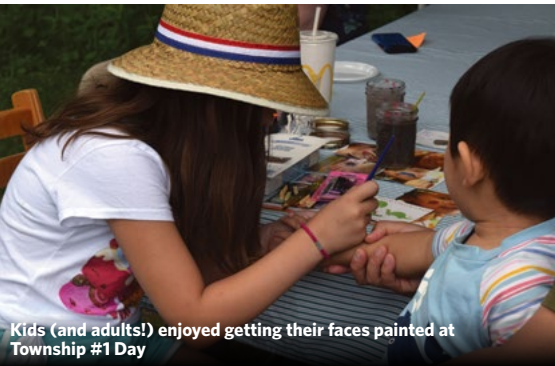
Beautiful decorations at our Summer Gala at Fiddletop!



Vegetables sprouting in the heritage garden



Moonshine Holler and the Adams Brothers enchant the crowd at Township #1 Day with their beautiful music



Kids (and adults!) enjoyed getting their faces painted at Township #1 Day



Cheerful faces at the Summer Gala check-in table, Jennifer Kole, Marya Makuc, Elisabeth Enoch and Cindy Hoogs



John Demos speaks to a packed house in July about his work as a witchcraft historian



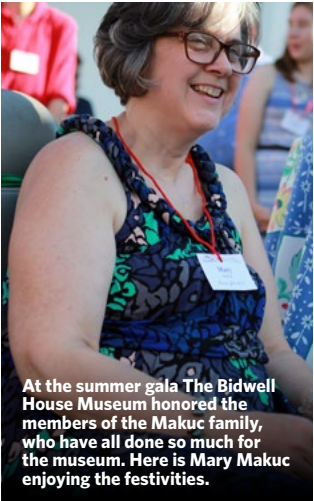
Finishing the new roof in June



Magnificent views from the poolside at Fiddletop during our gala in August!



Mimi and Ken Heyman, Kathryn Roberts and Karen Anderson enjoy the gala at Fiddletop



At the summer gala The Bidwell House Museum honored the members of the Makuc family, who have all done so much for the museum. Here is Mary Makuc enjoying the festivities.



Mark Makuc, with Jacob Makuc and Joe Makuc in the background, gets ready to speak to the crowd at the summer gala.



Gala co-chair Maggie Barkin with Marya Makuc



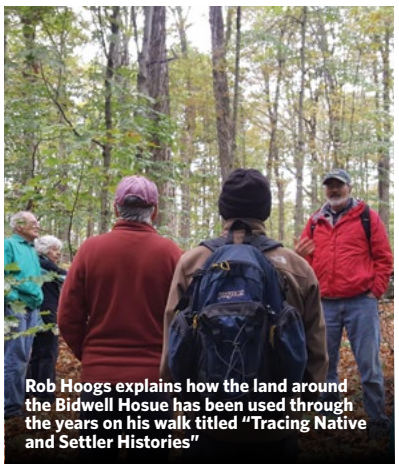
Richard Greene, Lindsay Crampton, Robert Hoogs and party co-chair Linnea Grealish



Bob Drinkwater discussing Adonijah Bidwell's tombstone at the very well attended cemetery walk in September



Tom Tynning entertaining the crowd during the Nature in Autumn walk



Rob Hoogs explains how the land around the Bidwell Hosue has been used through the years on his walk titled "Tracing Native and Settler Histories"



Rob Hoogs builds a bonfire before the Colonial Holiday of Thanksgiving party in November



Kathryn Roberts honors former Director Barbara Palmer at the Thanksgiving party



Tom Ryan, Will Conklin and Kate Ryan at the Thanksgiving party



# My summer at the Bidwell House Museum

**It has been my absolute pleasure** to work as the Head Docent and Caretaker here at the Bidwell House this season. I've learned so much about the history of this great community and the Berkshires as a whole. My first impressions of the house were interesting, to say the least. One of the kitchen windows in the apartment was a tarp-covered hole for my first few weeks at the house as restoration work continued on the 1820 ell's west wall. Hearing the daily updates from Henry Kirchdorfer and his crew reassured me that it wouldn't be all that bad. It was great getting to talk with them about the work that they were doing every morning. I hope I didn't pester them too much, but learning about their work greatly informed my understanding of the House and helped me figure out how to interpret the restoration project while I was giving tours.

Throughout the summer I had the pleasure of meeting the Young History Scholar interns and nearly an entire generation of Makucs. Beyond welcoming me to the museum during those first few weeks, I probably learned more from Joe and Justin Makuc than even the docent guides and books I was reading. As the summer progressed and new interns arrived I learned even more from each of them. Their impact on the museum is immeasurable and I certainly would not have been able to learn as much about this house as I did without them.



Paul and his (then fiancé now wife) Jenn Kole at the August Gala

As the summer progressed I was able to assist with History Talk series and the Gala, work with the Greenagers and assist Ruth Green in the gardens, and even measure the champion trees on our property with Rob Hoogs and Richard Greene. Each project, event, and facet of the Museum that I was able to assist with and learn about was incredibly interesting. I was exposed to so many different aspects of museum work and I would not have had nearly as wide-ranging an experience anywhere else. I am incredibly grateful to everyone who taught me about their area of expertise. So again, my heartfelt thanks go out to the Bidwell House. I will cherish the memories and experiences that I've gained from this summer for the rest of my life. And I look forward to the great things to come from the Bidwell House Museum.

—Paul Fuller

# New trustee Diane Austin

**At the May Board meeting,** the Bidwell House Board of Directors elected Diane Austin to a three-year term on the Board. A self-described “historian by avocation,” Diane has spent her entire professional career in higher education and is currently serving as the Vice President of Student Affairs at Lasell College in Newton, MA, where she has worked for over 22 years. A native of New York State, Diane earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at SUNY – Plattsburgh. She has lived in Boston for 40 years, and she and her husband, Aaron Nurick, have owned a home in Becket, MA since 1983. Diane is an Overseer Emerita for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and is Board President for Project STEP, a non-profit organization providing comprehensive string instrument instruction to talented children from underrepresented communities.



THANK YOU  
2017 Volunteers

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The weather was perfect for a birding walk on the Bidwell grounds in June

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# High School Students: Museum Offers Internships

**Thank you** to the Great Barrington and Monterey Cultural Councils and generous private donors, the museum will offer two-week stipended internships in Summer 2018. To learn more and to apply, please go to the museum's website.

*Application Deadline: April 30th*

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- Tom Ryan**
- Richard Bidwell Wilcox**

- Heather Kowalski**, *Executive Director*
- Katie Connell**, *Administrative Manager*
- Nadia Westenburg**, *Winter Caretaker*



Our first snow arrived in November! It only stayed on the ground for a few hours but we know there is more to come.

Fall/Winter 2017-18

museum

*the Bidwell House*



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