

FITCHBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2012

LET'S HAVE A PARTY

The year 2012 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Fitchburg Historical Society. To celebrate this event we are combining a special anniversary party with the official "unveiling" of the recently completed mural on a wall in the Fitchburg Room at the Fitchburg Library. The mural, FITCHBURG VILLAGE - EARLY 1900'S, is based on a 1908 photograph of the area of Fitchburg Village. Fitchburg Village was a settlement along the route of the Illinois Central Railroad. The small settlement included a general store, a post office, a feed mill, a lumber company, stockyards and farm implement dealer, a blacksmith shop, the railroad station, a small church and several homes. We were very fortunate to find two artists who did a magnificent job of recreating the village. The other part of the program will center on things that the Fitchburg Historical Society has done in the past twenty-five years and our hopes for the future. Please join us on Sunday, November 18th at 1:30 for this gala event. We will start the program in the THERMO-FISHER room on the second floor of the Fitchburg Library.

JOHN MUIR

It has recently come to our attention that John Muir, considered to be the father of our National Parks, taught school in Fitchburg in the mid 1860s. The book, "A Passion for Nature: the Life of John Muir" by Donald Worster is available at the Fitchburg Library. On pages 81 to 84 it tells that John Muir taught at a one room school located on what is now Highway M, near the intersection of Fish Hatchery Road. At that time Muir had been a student at the University of Wisconsin studying under Professor Ezra Carr. Muir taught at the Oak Hall School for a short term in the winter of 1861 – 1862. After one term he decided being a schoolteacher was not what he wanted to do with his life and he returned to the University. His roommate when he returned to the University was Charles Vroman, a member of a pioneer Fitchburg family that lived on Stoner's Prairie. The paragraphs that concern his tenure at Oak Hall and the University are quite interesting. Descriptions of some of the novel inventions attributed to Muir were detailed. These included clocks to time students' recitations, a desk that opened books to the appropriate place, and a device that started the fire in the stove at the school so the schoolhouse was warm when he and the students arrived. These paragraphs were taken from Worster's book and are cited to Muir's own autobiography. In the Muir file at the Archives at the State of Wisconsin Historical Library there is a handwritten note from William Frost dated 1920 that says Muir taught at the Lake Harriet School in Oregon Township. It is interesting that Muir taught in the area, regardless of which account is correct.

FAMILY HISTORY

The motto of the Fitchburg Historical Society is ***History is Yesterday Today and Tomorrow.*** With this in mind we would like to invite Fitchburg people, members of the Historical Society or not, to think about adding their family histories to the archives of the FHS. Deb Henke, member of the FHS, is willing to help, one on one, with anyone who would like to get started documenting their family's arrival to

Fitchburg, whether it was in Fitchburg's early history, the 1900s or even the 21st century. A good example of what can be done to do a basic history is on the desk in the Fitchburg Room at the library. If you are interested in a project like this for your family you can leave a message on the FHS voice mail (608-729-1783) or on our email; woodedarchives@gmail.com.

A GREAT APPRAISAL EVENT

The Fitchburg Historical Society in partnership with the Fitchburg Public Library sponsored an antiques appraisal event on Saturday, October 29, 2012 at the library. Many people from Fitchburg and other communities enjoyed the appraisal fair because of the knowledge and expertise of Mark Moran who did the appraisals. Mr. Moran has over 20 years experience in evaluating antiques including work on PBS's Antiques Roadshow and as the author of more than 20 books about various types of collectibles. Each of the participants seemed pleased with the evaluations of their family treasures because of Mr. Moran's professionalism. He often provided additional comment or advice to assist the owner in understanding the value or importance of the object being reviewed. The entire appraisal afternoon at the library to find out "What's it Worth?" was a positive and entertaining experience for all.