



Spring/Summer 2017 Newsletter

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.

Introducing Heather Kowalski, New Director

On May 1, Heather Kowalski became the new Executive Director of the Bidwell House Museum. Heather took over the position from Barbara Palmer, who has been appointed associate director for museum budget and operations at the Williams College Museum of Art.

Heather Kowalski joined the Bidwell staff in October 2015 as administrative manager. Heather has extensive museum experience, having served as registrar for the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh for 11 years and as assistant registrar at the Carnegie Museum of Art prior to that. Heather holds a BA in Art History from Penn State University. She grew up in Schenectady, NY. Her husband Jesse Kowalski is Curator of Exhibitions at the Norman Rockwell Museum. Heather and Jesse live in Lenox with their two children.

"When I moved to the Berkshires in 2015 my long time dream of working in an historic house quickly came true when I was hired by the Bidwell House Museum," noted Kowalski. "My experience at the museum over the last 18 months has been really wonderful, and I have been so impressed by the dedication of outgoing director Barbara Palmer and the Board of Directors. I am so very honored that the Board has now asked me to take over as the new Executive Director. Barbara has been a great mentor, and she has big shoes to fill, but I am thrilled to lead the museum during such an exciting time. And my children are so happy that they might get to spend even more time visiting such a fascinating place!"

Barbara Palmer joined the board in congratulating Heather Kowalski. "I have worked closely with Heather, and I know

the museum is in good hands," she noted. "Heather has been instrumental in the restoration campaign, and she is bringing superb professional expertise to the museum." Stop by to say hi!



Heather Kowalski and Barbara Palmer



Reenactors welcome visitors at Township No. 1 Day

2017 Season Celebrates Restoration and History

This summer, the Bidwell House Museum is celebrating the extensive restoration of the 1760s historic house, achieved with funding help from many generous donors, and work by a team of expert local craftspeople.

To welcome visitors back to the rural hilltop site of the original early settlement, the museum is featuring a series of events focused on life in New England in the time of the first English settlers. The popular history lecture series returns with talks by Professor John Demos, Bernhard Drew, Gary Leveille, and Rene Wendell. The museum is also expanding its offerings of nature programs.

Get an introduction to birding, learn how archaeologists investigate the past, enjoy music, crafts and reenactors at Township No. 1 Day, and so much more! The Museum will open for the season on Memorial Day. The full schedule of events can be found on the museum's website: www.bidwellhousemuseum.org

Mark your calendar for highlights: the opening on Sunday, May 28th, featuring a concert by Diane Taraz, singing and playing historic instruments, Township No. 1 Day on Saturday, July 8, and the festive garden party benefiting the museum, on Saturday, August 5th.

Archaeology!

The Bidwell House will be the site of an archaeological investigation this May and June. What will the archaeology team find? Perhaps things Adonijah Bidwell's family owned, or answers to questions: Where was the privy? Who lived in the house over the cellar hole? Not all will be answered by the limited dig, but any findings are sure to be intriguing.

Are you interested in participating? Professor Eric Johnson of UMass, Amherst, is willing to have a few lay archaeologists as part of his crew. Please email the museum at bidwellhouse@gmail.com if you would like to learn more. And definitely plan to attend Professor Johnson's talk on Saturday, June 17 at 10 am at the museum. You can learn about this sort of work and see what has been found so far.

President's Message

Spring is in the air! The birds are back. Flowers are budding. Kids are outside playing. Carpenters are hammering. Everything's growing and changing, shiny and new and beautiful.

And so is the Bidwell House Museum. Thanks to your contributions and support, our historic preservation contractor – Henry Kirchdorfer from Stockbridge and his crew – has spent the past six months restoring our treasured building with all new cedar shingle roofing, insulation, updated electrical and communications systems, repointed chimney, and reinforced structure. Several old timbers, and some sheathing and siding were rotted and had to be replaced – they had only lasted 250 years. In the process, the old saltbox frame was exposed on the west side where the 1820s ell had covered up the junction. The original sheathing boards are up to 2' wide! New trim will be installed to highlight the original saltbox geometry.

Our grand opening ceremony, concert, and rededication of the restored house will be held on Sunday, May 28 at 3:00 p.m. Come join us and celebrate this milestone.

Henry is now scrambling to finish the restoration work, but some will likely continue into June to repair the new carriage barn roof and gutter that was damaged by a violent gale that blew through the property on February 25, bringing down many large trees. Fortunately the damage to the house was limited and covered by insurance. Thanks to Roger Tryon, Steve Seiser, Richard Greene and other volunteers who have cut up and removed the trees and debris.

The museum staff is changing and growing too. The board is excited to welcome Heather Kowalski as the museum's new Executive Director, effective May 1. Heather has been the museum's Manager of Administration and Membership for the past one and a half years.

At the same time, the board and I are extremely proud of Barbara Palmer on her appointment to be Associate Director for museum budget and operations at the Williams College Museum of Art. She has been a consummate professional and we have been very fortunate to have her as director for the past 7-½ years. It is interesting to note that a number of the prior directors and staff have advanced to senior positions at other museums and cultural organizations around the country. The Bidwell House Museum has proven to be a fertile training ground for museum professionals, a testament to the quality of our remote gem of a museum.

We are also excited to announce that we will have a graduate student living at the house this summer as docent, caretaker, and historian-in-residence. This budding historian will have an immersive experience living with history and curating an historic house and collection. It will be interesting for us to "see" the museum through her/his fresh eyes.

And finally we will be welcoming several new trustees to the board at our annual meeting in May. Stay tuned for more about them on our website and in the fall newsletter. Thanks to our retiring trustees – Christine Goldfinger, Joseph Gromacki Esq., and Michael White – for their many years of service. They will continue to serve on the museum's advisory board.

Come join us as we spring into the new season – fresh and clean and new – old and historic.

Rob Hoogs, President of the Board of Trustees

Reflections on a Sacred Place

by Barbara Palmer

With my time as the Bidwell House executive director – chief cook and bottle washer, instigator, cheerleader and head worrier – coming to an end, this is a love letter to this place and to all of you who are the community that is its keeper.

I was hired in fall 2009 for a part-time position to run the museum and to connect it more closely to the community and a wider audience. "Let them know about this special place, and they will come!" I thought to myself. "Create programs, let the world know, invite, and give community members a reason to care." Bidwell House members and friends came. They welcomed me and have supported my endeavors here for over seven years.

My job and the museum's ambitions grew to full time as programs expanded. History talks, Township days, concerts, workshops, heritage hikes.... As well, the building called for attention, most spectacularly by springing multiple leaks two hours before a fundraising party a few years ago. The brave and dedicated volunteer board – my 16 bosses – thoroughly considered options and then committed themselves to a major campaign to preserve the historic buildings for future generations. This is an enormous gift of love, time and treasure to the community now and for many tomorrows.

Why? What do we all love about this place? For me, it's the palpable connection to the past: the brave adventurers – men, women and children – who carved a life here, the stories of faith, bravery, success, struggle, preservation, desertion and renewal over the centuries. One can experience history at this place, because the house and its land are authentic witnesses. I love the gift of this experience for visitors and for the teen interns. It is precious, and for some it has been truly life-changing. I love that this witness to history leads us to ask the tough questions: what happened to the Native people? How was the minister wealthy? Did they own slaves? Why did wives die? Who was Adonijah Bidwell?

I love the community that cares enough to help preserve the museum, to support student internships, to maintain the grounds. A road crew that clears Art School Road in the worst weather, Select Boards and town committees that listen, people who volunteer their time and ideas.

I feel very, very lucky for the opportunity to have served this museum and this community. I learned every day. I am thrilled that Heather Kowalski has been named the new director. Heather brings new ideas and excellent museum skills to lead the Bidwell House forward. I will continue to live in Township No. 1, and my application for life membership is on Heather's desk.

With much gratitude to you all, — Barbara

Exposed west wall of the museum, revealing the original 1760s saltbox frame and sheathing



A Brief History of the Stockbridge Mohicans

By Richard Bidwell Wilcox, first given as a talk in June 2016

Over time it has become the enduring myth of the Stockbridge Indian Mission: the story of Christian Missionary John Sergeant, struggling through the howling wilderness to preach and convert members of the Tribe, saving their souls and providing for them a safe haven, in a fast changing world, at what was first called Indian Town, and in 1737 chartered as the Town of Stockbridge.

But that myth, as myths tend to be, was carved out of a greater story, involving almost as many dimensions as there were people involved. First let me share with you that I believe both missionaries, the Rev. John Sergeant and the Rev. Jonathan Edwards were pure of heart, doing what they believed to be in the best interests of the Tribe. They, however, acted through the lens of their ethnocentric world where a good Christian and a good Englishman were mirror images of each other. It was also a world view filtered by the political necessities of their position as community leaders.

Christianity in Stockbridge then journeyed down that well-paved road of good intentions. Their lens caused the English to encourage members of the Tribe (while telling them that failing to do so would risk eternal damnation) to build an English style house and fence in their property, and insist they no longer live a modified nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Trying to force the men of the Tribe to give up hunting and become good English farmers, when the job of raising crops was traditionally performed by women of the Tribe, was the last step in the undermining of their culture. Of course the English were quite happy that over 100 Stockbridge Indians were willing to fight alongside them, volunteering during both the French & Indian War and the Revolutionary War.

The Stockbridge Indians, who acquired that name during their time in Stockbridge, were actually remnants of the much larger Mohican Nation, which itself was part of an Algonquin language group that encompassed much of the Northeast. It has been suggested that they

approached Christianity as a means of survival through assimilation in a last ditch effort to save their fast shrinking world that once encompassed all of the Hudson River Valley from Manhattan to Lake Champlain, and east as far as the Westfield River. It was a shrinking world, but it was the English settlers worship of land and not Christianity that became the driving force of change.

The Massachusetts Bay colony, driven by political, territorial and security concerns, wanted to create a buffer between it, the Canadian French Catholics, whose Pope was considered by the Puritans to be the Anti-Christ, and their allied Indian Tribes in Canada, as well as to firmly establish its borders with New York and Connecticut. First line of defense was to develop relations with the Mohican Tribe to use them as a buffer, some might say as canon fodder. Second there was a squatter-like attitude in creating boundaries, especially with New York, which could be accomplished by buying land from the Tribe for settlement.

Ostensibly Stockbridge was created by the Great and General Court to bring all the Mohicans together in one place under the shelter of a Christian Mission and away from the corrupting influence of some less than Christian English and Dutch settlers. Rev. John Sergeant, the school master Timothy Woodbridge, a great-grandson of Praying Towns founder Rev. John Eliot, and four other English families, were chosen to set a good Christian example for the Indians. History suggests they provided a somewhat different example. The reality, of course, was the need to greatly reduce the Tribal footprint on the land in Western Mass so that that major force of change, land speculation, could surge ahead.

Stockbridge, six miles square or 36 square miles or 23,040 acres, was butted up against the New York border. Shortly after the death of the Rev. John Sergeant in 1749, members of the Tribe began to complain about some of the English set-

tlers being involved in unauthorized land takings. In 1750 the Great and General Court set up an Indian Proprietorship, so that, at least in theory, the Indians could control the distribution of land, protecting them from white land speculators. However, with the undermining of cultural practices and beliefs, coupled with the unscrupulous behavior of some of the English settlers, they soon fell into debt.

By 1765 the Great and General Court gave them permission to sell land to pay their debts. By 1785 the great majority of their land was sold and some 280 souls accepted an offer from the Oneida Indians to settle on their land, 160 miles to the west, on what became New Stockbridge, New York.

Land speculation was moving west in New York State as well, and in violation of Federal law, New Stockbridge land was slowly being sold. In 1815 an attempt was made to create a settlement on the White River in Indiana, but by 1821 the United States paid the Tribe \$2,000 to relinquish their rights there. By 1824 members of the Tribe began moving to the Green Bay area in Wisconsin. Today the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohicans is a thriving community with 1500 enrolled members living on the Reservation at Bowler, Wisconsin. For a more detailed history and information on their community go to www.mohican.com.

In closing, I will share a story of some twenty years ago when I was canoeing down the Housatonic River with long time friend Jim Davids, the Stockbridge-Munsee Tribal Conservation Officer, who, as we paddled down the river, commented on how good the town looked and in particular the river. Then, as he would occasionally do, he decided to poke at me and said, "Hey Rick, you know we never signed a treaty with you, so we can have all this land back anytime we want."

Join Rick at a tour of "Indiantown" Stockbridge, led by Bonney Hartley, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, on August 26. By reservation and for museum members only, please contact the museum.

YOUNG HISTORY SCHOLAR SECTION

Colonial Cooking *by Talia Pott*

In the mid 18th century, around the time that Rev. Adonijah Bidwell was called to be the minister of Township No.1, now Monterey and Tyringham, Bostonians and Connecticut residents were making their way out west or north to start life anew in the outlying frontier of western Massachusetts. As long as they cleared land, planted English grass, and built a regulation sized house, they would be gifted five acres of property from the Royal Governor of Massachusetts. These new migrants would bring their food preferences and cooking processes, but would also have to learn to adjust to new soil and climate conditions, which forced them to modify what they ate.

According to the Colebrook Historical Society (which has relied heavily on a pamphlet entitled *Foodways in the Northeast, The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, Annual Proceedings, 1982*), these western New England settlers preferred to eat pork and beef, with relatively little veal or mutton in their diets. Wild turkey and goose were also widely consumed. Based on a shipment of seeds from Boston in 1757, we know

that “4 different kinds of cabbage, 2 of lettuce, 2 turnips, onions, squash, cucumber, 4 kinds of peas, radish, parsley, parsnips, beans, asparagus and an assortment of herbs” were among the kinds of vegetables settlers grew at that time. Breads were also very common, and were made from wheat and corn and rye. Fruits, especially apples, pears, peaches, local berries such as red and black raspberries, blueberries and strawberries, and rhubarb were also grown.

The cooking in colonial houses was done in the kitchen, just like it is today, but with some major differences. In the Bidwell House, the

keeping room is set up to display the cooking utensils of the era.

The first tool that was different from what we use for cooking today was the swinging crane, which is a moveable iron bar that hangs across the fireplace. It was a mid-1700s innovation replacing the stationary bar, and it became popular quickly. With its lateral movement, the crane would allow adjustment of the pots over the heat, as well as provide access to the

18th century. It could be used by placing its legs over the fire for a close cook or by hanging it over the fire on the crane. Alternatively, it could hold coals on top in addition to being heated from below in order to allow the contents to be cooked from both the top and bottom at the same time.

The spider skillet (two in picture) is an old-fashioned frying pan that would be set on a bed of hot coals. Three legs keep the pan raised off the fireplace floor, making room for the embers underneath.

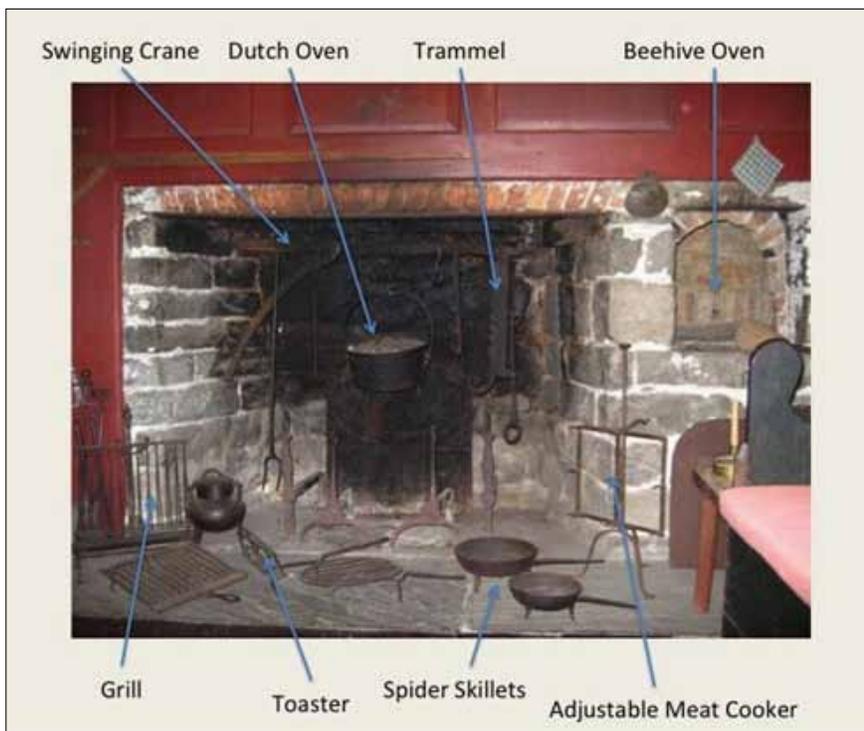
There are also several meat cooking devices. The 18th-century grill is a two-part contraption that would open to allow access to four hooks from which the meat would hang. A drip pan caught the fat, which the cook could carefully save for later use, such as for candle-making.

There is an old fashioned rotisserie (not pictured), which like modern rotisseries was used to cook fowl. It has a spit sticking across it where the bird would be cooked, five set positions and a spout, out of which the excess fat would drizzle. To cook the bird, the spit rotates so that it gets a well-rounded juicy flavor and crispy skin.

And finally, there is the adjustable standing meat cooker. Using the strategically placed hooks on the sides and center to secure the meat, fish or sometimes vegetables, cooks would let their food smoke close to the fire while they engaged in other kitchen chores.

Bread was baked in a beehive oven, positioned next to the fireplace and lined with bricks. A fire would be started in the oven and allowed to burn hot for several hours until the bricks lining the oven reached a steady baking temperature. Then the embers would be scraped out of the oven and the dough inserted. After many hours, the bread would be ready to eat. Since a family typically baked only once a week, the bread would begin to get stale, so the family heated it over the fire using the toaster tool.

While life for the settlers of western Massachusetts was challenging, their ingenuity, creativity and New England perseverance served them well. With a number of clever cooking tools, work in the kitchen was made more manageable.



pots by swinging the crane all the way out of the fireplace. Not only could it regulate the temperature of the pots, it also prevented one’s long skirt from catching on fire. Although it happened only occasionally, it was a horrifying event when it did occur.

The second item of interest is the trammel, a device used to hang a pot over the fire at an adjustable height. With its arrangement of links and a hook, the trammel would allow for the raising and lowering of a kettle.

In the photograph we can see a Dutch oven, a very popular cooking implement during the

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Carpenters' Marks *by Marya Makuc*

During a visit to the Bidwell House, you may have observed or been shown a floorboard with the Roman numeral XIX engraved on its surface. As an intern and docent at the museum, I explained what was believed to be the truth about this marking several times. On one of my recent tours a question was raised regarding the Roman numeral on the floorboard. I went on to explain how Jack Hargis and David Brush, during the restoration, replaced the original boards in the dining room with those from the attic and found the Roman numerals to be interesting, thus displaying two of them. After finishing my explanation, the person countered by saying he had been

Of the six types of carpenters' marks, I have been able to find two exposed in the Bidwell House. The first, and most obvious mark, is the tally mark which can be found in multiple places throughout the house. It can best be seen in the dining room, one board next to the fire place and the other closer to the center table. These tally marks can also be seen in the lean-to attic on a few of the floorboards. Although the marks are called tally marks, they do not necessarily refer to what we now call tally marks — the counting system of lines and dashes — but are usually Roman numerals. Within the Bidwell House, all of the tally marks are engraved by Roman numerals.



Marriage marks found on the mortise and tenon in the lean-to attic

In many cases, the boards, posts, mortises and tenons were planed off after construction, which resurfaced the lumber and usually erased any trace of carpenters' marks. As the marks in the Bidwell House are in the attic, they would have been hidden from the public and had no reason to be planed off. The Bidwell House is very lucky to have more than one type of carpenters' mark visible, as these engravings are unusual to find. Be sure to look for these fascinating engravings next time you visit the museum!



Tally marks on a floorboard in the dining room

taught previously that the marks were used to show how much surface area the board would provide. This immediately sparked a question, as I wondered the true purpose of the Roman numeral. After much research on the topic, I decided to approach Mr. Bill Finch, an architectural preservationist who recently studied the Bidwell House. With his help, I was able to piece together a new understanding of the different carpenters' marks throughout the home.

Carpenters' marks, including layout marks, level marks, wall marks, marriage marks, ritual marks and tally marks, would be engraved into lumber with a race knife or awl for a variety of purposes. Layout marks were usually engraved during the building process to show where cuts should be made or pegs should be inserted. Thus they were temporary and are not normally found exposed. Level marks were engraved as lines on posts or beams to ensure a level building would result. Wall marks were engraved on posts, boards, or beams to show which wall on a building the lumber went to. Marriage marks were engraved, usually as roman numerals or arabic symbols, on a mortise and tenon to represent that they were a pair. Ritual marks were engraved by the inhabitants of a house who believed the marks would ward off evil spirits. Lastly, tally marks were usually engraved by the sawyer on the underside of boards to signify the length of a board.

The other carpenters' mark found in the Bidwell House is the marriage mark. So far, marriage marks have only been observed in the lean-to attic, yet most likely others are hidden under plaster in several of the other rooms. In the lean-to attic you can find them on a few of the beams, mortises and tenons. These marriage marks are Roman numerals, showing that the sawyer was likely of English descent. Sawyers of other nationalities such as German or French often used the Arabic counting system.

Changing Lifestyle and the Impact on Furniture

by Fiona Herson

Pt. I —The two canopied beds in the upstairs of the Bidwell house offer a window into parts of daily life in the 18th century. As one can imagine, life was much different in the 1700s than it is now. One way that you can see these differences is the furniture in a room, not just the type of bed versus chairs or the like but the style. It can tell you a lot about what a room was used for and how that's different from today. The second part of this piece also explores how the style of the furniture has changed to reflect the lifestyles of those using it. By looking at these factors you can see how life was in the 1700s and how it has changed since then.

depended on whose bedroom it was, but they mainly consisted of entertaining guests and doing inside work. The type of bed in a room can give us some hint as to what kind of activities other than sleeping a bedroom would have been used for. The best example of this at the Bidwell house is the two different kinds of canopy beds.

Until fairly recently most work was done in the home, and most homes had very little space that wasn't also a bedroom. Because of this, bedrooms were used for a number of activities other than sleeping. What these activities were

The bed in the best chamber is a canopied bed, with curtains on all four sides of the bed and a "tester," or canopy, the piece of cloth stretched between the four posts at the top of the frame. A canopied bed would have had two main uses in colonial New England: the first would have been to retain heat in the winter; the second would have been that the best chamber was used to entertain important visitors and close friends. When this happened the curtains could be closed to hide the bed. This was also a way in which people could show style, and so

Museum Offers High School Internships

The essays on these pages were written by high school interns. Eight students—Ella Carlson, Fiona Herson, Jacob Makuc, Joe Makuc, Justin Makuc, Marya Makuc, Talia Pott and Samantha Watson—interned at the museum last summer. They contributed their talents and enthusiasm to visitors, events and scholarship. Thank you! Thanks to the Great Barrington and Monterey Cultural Councils and generous private donors, the museum will offer internships in Summer 2017. To learn more and to apply, please go to the museum's website.

Changing Lifestyle , *con't* —

it became common for people to either make curtains out of the most expensive material they could afford or to embroider them elaborately, or in some cases do both. The curtains on the canopied bed in the best



chamber provide a good example of that. The tree of life motif was a sought-after print that became a popular embroidery design in the 1700s because it was so elaborate and showed off one's skills so well.

The canopied bed in the parlor chamber has a different purpose and because of this the cur-

tains are much simpler. It is what is referred to as a half tester: it has less than half a tester, the area between the posts above the bed, and only two posts. Half-tester beds are similar to a modern Murphy bed, in that they fold up into themselves. Like a traditional canopy bed, they had curtains, and these were used to hide the bed when it was folded up. The primary reason to have a bed that folded up was for floor space



to work on. The room that was created would most likely have been used for hand work, ranging from preparing, carding, and spinning wool to weaving or knitting and sewing as well as basket making, although that would have been more common out of doors. Because of the room it afforded and the greater

use of a space it allowed, a half-tester bed would have been invaluable.

Pt. II – Canopied beds can also provide a glimpse into how the way we use furniture has changed and how our furniture has changed along with this. Today half-tester and canopied beds are uncommon, seen in historic homes but not in modern houses. The decreasing popularity of canopied beds occurred for a number of reasons. The first was that with the advent of central heating, the curtains were no longer needed to keep the occupants of the bed warm. Around the same time, visiting standards changed and people were no longer entertained in bedrooms, so hiding beds became less necessary. People have also stopped doing hand work in their rooms, thus eliminating the need for half-tester beds and the extra floor space they provided. We still do some work in our rooms, but it is mostly on computers, which we no longer need a desk for, let alone extra floor space. People do still have Murphy beds, but they are used as guest beds or to create floor space in small apartments, which you could argue is the same use, but it is in the end for different purposes. These factors have led to the demise of the half-tester and canopied beds, though the canopied bed has been seeing a resurgence in recent years, brought back by books like Harry Potter.

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North wall restoration in snow bounty



P.O. Box 537, Monterey, MA 01245
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Can you see the ghost of Adonijah Bidwell in this fallen maple trunk on his property?



Fabulous Fiddletop estate – site of the Summer Garden Party Gala – the place to be on Saturday, August 5th, 4 - 7 p.m. You are invited – Mark your calendar!!!

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Good News Update: Restoration Campaign Reaches \$601,976 Thank you, Donors and Friends!

Donors have raised \$72,626 toward the \$100,000 Jane & Jack Fitzpatrick Trust Matching Gift. With your help, we will raise it all. If you are able, please make a donation – and come by the museum to see the restoration work you are funding!

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