



# Hopkinton Historical Society **NEWS**

*Celebrating the history of our town!*

P.O. Box 423, 168 Hayden Rowe Street, Hopkinton, MA 01748

(508) 435-4502

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The Hopkinton Historical Society is an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving our Town's history. All donations are tax-deductible.

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**Upcoming dates:**

- Oct 17: Hopkinton Springs Hotel
- Nov 12: Harvest Supper
- Dec 5: Historic Maps

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## LUCY FITCH PERKINS (1865-1937)

*Contributed by Gail Clifford*

The author of the well-known children's *Twins* book series was born in Maples, Indiana, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 1865. Her father, Appleton Fitch, a gifted teacher who was forced to go into the lumber business after the Civil War and its resulting hard economic times, decided to send his wife Elizabeth and daughters to Massachusetts to live with his parents at their farm in Hopkinton, Massachusetts. A devastating fire had reduced his livelihood and he could no longer support his family in Indiana. And so the family arrived in Hopkinton at Elmwood (now known as Elmwood Farm on Ash Street) in November of 1873 on Thanksgiving morning.

It was not an easy homecoming for them. Previous visits to the old farmstead had been joyful summertime jaunts. Now that they were to live there, and be supported by the grandparents, new rules were enforced. They were only to use the west-facing door (facing Ash Street) which gave directly onto the stairs, and were to live entirely on the second floor. They were all to stay in one bedroom on the north side of the house. The tenant farmer and his wife, Mr. & Mrs. Brown, occupied the first floor, and the family could not impose on their living areas. Lucy, a forthright and outspoken young lady, was extremely unhappy with the living arrangements, and suggested vehemently that they all pack up and move back to Maples. At this time, the girls' mother told them that they had no home to go back to. Their father's losses from the fire meant that he had to sell their house in Maples in order to rebuild his business. Thus began a period of extremely hard work on the part of Elizabeth and the little girls. Ultimately, the tenant farmer's lease was bought out, and the Fitch grandparents and their son Elijah, as well as Elizabeth and the girls, took over the entire work and administration of the farm. The physical labor of this endeavor was

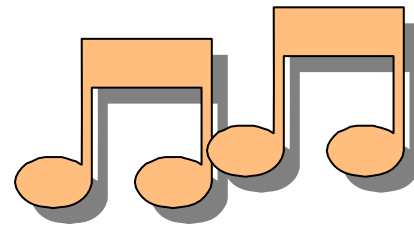
immense. The three older children were enrolled in cousin Mary Baker's school within a week of their arrival. Snow arrived, and made travel to school impossible at times. However, all efforts were made, snow or no snow, to attend church services. Elizabeth more and more took on the duties of cleaning and cooking, as well as many of the farming chores.

Grandmother Fitch was a wonderful storyteller, and the children enjoyed especially hearing about how the grandparents helped slaves to escape during the Civil War. There was a secret hidey-hole in the large pantry where a man could hide behind the potato sacks. However, she said, the hidey-hole was not used very often, as they would feed and warm the escapees right in the kitchen.

Meanwhile, Appleton's lumber business was growing again, and in 1875 he sent for his wife and daughters to return to Maples. They remained there until early 1879 when they moved to nearby Kalamazoo, Michigan. The schools in Kalamazoo were much better than the rural teachings in Maples, and Appleton and Elizabeth always wanted the richest education for their daughters. Appleton always wanted to return to teaching, but the positions were not as lucrative as what he could earn in the lumber industry.

Lucy's proficiency at art gained her admittance to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. She returned to Hopkinton to visit with her grandmother for several weeks, Grandfather Fitch having passed away. Her school career was successful in every way. While there, she met and married Dwight Perkins, an architectural student at M.I.T. When a friend suggested that she write and illustrate children's books, she conceived the idea of writing about international sets of twins, and her first book, *The Dutch Twins*, was published in 1912. Twenty-five more *Twins* followed. Lucy died on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March, 1937, in Pasadena, California, where she and Dwight had gone on a vacation.

In 1956, her daughter Eleanor Ellis Perkins published a charming biography of her gifted mother called *Eve Among the Puritans*, from which much of the information in this article was taken.



## A swinging start to fall!

On Sunday, September 10, 2010, the Hopkinton Historical Society presented a music program sponsored by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. John Root, of Amherst Massachusetts, presented Popular Music of the Golden Years (1929-1939). As a vocalist and multi-instrumentalist John has presented programs throughout New England for over thirty years.

John sang over 40 snippets of seldom-heard verses as well as the more familiar choruses of these songs, accompanying himself at the keyboard with authentic period arrangements. Some of our favorites were "Toot, Toot, Tootsie (Goo' Bye!)"; "Heart of My Heart"; "Singing in the Rain"; "Up a Lazy River"; "It Had To Be You" and NPR's selection of the best song of the century: "Somewhere Over the Rainbow".

John not only sang and performed on the keyboard but also gave explanations of his choices. Some were the most popular, some broke new ground, and some had hidden meanings. The free program was attended by approximately 25 thankful residents.



Photograph by Ray Gendreau

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

### October Meeting Hopkinton Springs Hotel: Commemorative Signposts Sunday, October 17, 2:00 pm

Do you know the location of the Hopkinton Springs Hotel? Although the hotel no longer exists, this historic site in the vicinity of Spring and Lyford Streets in Woodville is undeveloped, and traces of the foundation, hot springs, and other features can still be made out. Thanks to the research efforts and hard work of James Regan, a recent Hopkinton High School graduate, three commemorative signposts have been placed at the site of this famous historic site of Hopkinton. The signposts contain pictures, site maps, and information about the Hopkinton Springs Hotel and its relation to 19<sup>th</sup> century Hopkinton. This excellent project and community service was provided by James last year as part of his Eagle Scout qualification requirements, and James has now moved on to Hofstra University in Long Island, New York. Peter Regan (James' father and collaborator) will provide a summary of his research and work efforts that led to the creation of these historic markers. Meet at the Town Hall parking lot at 2 pm. **Note: This visit will involve a short hike through the woods (not handicap accessible).**

### November Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Harvest Supper and Silent Auction Friday, November 12, 5:00 pm

Please come and bring a friend to this long-standing traditional community event sponsored by the Historical Society. This event, open to the public, will be held at St. John's Parish Hall, 20 Church Street, and doors open at 5 pm (dinner at 6 pm). Over the years, we've had an incredible outpouring of support from local businesses for the silent auction, and dinner is always spectacular! Please plan to attend this very important annual fundraising event for the Historical Society. If you need transportation from your home or if you have other questions, please contact Bill Shaw at (508) 435-0074.

### December Meeting Historical Maps Sunday, December 5, 3:00 pm 223 Pond Street (members only)

Please join us at the home of Historical Society members Andre and Christine Navez for a tour and discussion of their household display of historical maps (of Hopkinton and beyond). Over the years, Andre has developed a tremendous interest in the history of cartography and the factors that have shaped map-making over the years. His collection includes one "bird's eye" view of Hopkinton (1880), two 1875 maps and one 1889 map of Hopkinton. The other 80 or so maps cover much of the world including 1540, 1548 and 1556 maps of what would become New England and 1635, 1775, 1776, 1783, 1826, 1828 and 1864 maps which include our area. The other maps range from 1522 to 1984 (most are 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century), covering areas where Andre has lived or traveled. A handout will be provided on the subject of maps, charts, plans, views, woodblock vs. intaglio vs. lithograph prints, projections, the problem of longitude and the shifting expertise of cartographic centers over time.

## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to **Claire Wright** and her host of volunteers at the Cotton Candy booth at the Hopkinton PolyArts Festival on Saturday, September 18. As a fundraiser for the Historical Society, more than 400 servings of the pink fluffy stuff were sold! Volunteers included **Russ Greve, Ray Gendreau, Dave Spengler, Bill Shaw, Kathy Yankee, and Merylyn Mezitt.**

Please welcome **Ray Gendreau** as the Historical Society's new Program Chair. Ray grew up in Washington State and moved to Hopkinton 25 years ago. He's a retired Air Force Lieutenant-Colonel, and Ray has been involved in many Town activities, including veterans groups and the Town library. Ray lives with his wife, Sheila, and they have many visits with their grandchildren who reside in the area. Welcome on board, Ray!



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