

# MHS Miscellany

Number 103 / Fall 2012

## THE SHAPES OF MOURNING

For the half century preceding his death, Judge Samuel Sewall kept a journal, now in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, in which he recorded not just the extraordinary occurrences that took place in Massachusetts but also the conventions of everyday life. Among the latter are dozens of notes about funeral attendance and the memorial tokens that he would typically collect on such occasions. “Scarvs and Rings” or “Rings and Gloves” he jotted again and again. For colonial New Englanders, the mourning rings distributed at or after a funeral were a key part of the rituals observed around death. While the design would change, as well as the social practices of how to wear memorial jewelry, for at least two centuries Americans, like their English counterparts, would wear rings, brooches, slides, pendants, and other jewels in memory of members of a family and a community.

In the autumn exhibition *In Death Lamented: The Tradition of Anglo-American Mourning Jewelry*, the MHS has on display 100 examples of these keepsakes, a combined collection of the Society’s holdings, selections from the private collection of jeweler Sarah Nehama, and complementary pieces from Adams National Historical Park, Historic New England, and the Peabody Essex Museum. Ms. Nehama and MHS Curator of Art Anne E. Bentley have selected and arranged them to show the striking range of styles and craftsmanship employed, from the simple gold bands of the 17th century to the intricate and opulent earring and brooch sets of the late Victorian era. They also tell the story of a culture’s changing sensibility around death and grief.





*Portrait of Mrs. Baker, circa 1675,  
wearing mourning dress.*

The earliest examples, closely related to the memento mori tradition that exhorted the faithful always to think on death, incorporated iconography such as skeletons, grave diggers' tools, and the winged death's head.

The latter was especially prevalent in the 18th century, including a 1736 ring made to commemorate Gov. Jonathan Belcher's first wife, Mary. As the 18th century closed and the 19th century advanced, the images people chose for their memorial tokens softened, the stark reminders of death giving way to vignettes of loss and mourning: women in neoclassical robes wept at tombs, all captured in reddish-brown sepia ink on ivory, or plaited bands of hair appeared underneath crystals, an intimate reminder of a lost loved one. Memorial jewelry became particularly ornate in the mid 19th century, when Queen Victoria's deep mourning for Prince Albert set a rigorous standard for social expectations and the Gothic revival took over decorative arts. Large gold bands and brooches intricately chased and studded with jet stones or pearls became the common currency of mourning, and hair woven into neat patterns or astonishingly detailed designs became ubiquitous.

Since items made especially for mourning shared in the trends shaping jewelry design in general, the exhibition also features key pieces that were not originally created as memorial tokens. Among these visitors will find the ring and brooch that Abigail Adams had commissioned to honor her and John's friendship with Mercy Otis Warren. Beneath the crystal on the ring, which Abigail gave to Mercy, rest a few snippets of Abigail's and John's hair—a true relic of the Revolutionary gen-

The Massachusetts Historical Society is an independent research library that collects, preserves, makes accessible, and communicates manuscripts and other materials that promote the study of the history of Massachusetts and the nation—a mission it has pursued since 1791.

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MHS Miscellany, no. 103  
Periodical Newsletter of the  
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*Masthead illustration:*

"Plan & Elevation of the Tontine Crescent, now erecting in Boston." From the *Massachusetts Magazine*, 1794. All images are from the MHS collections unless otherwise credited. The MHS occupied the Tontine Crescent from 1794 until 1833. Ring, made in 1794, commemorating the death of the Rev. Edward Wigglesworth.



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*Hours:*

The MHS reading room is open to the public free of charge, 9 AM to 4:45 PM Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; 9 AM to 7:45 PM on Tuesdays; and 9 AM to 4 PM on Saturdays.

*For more information:*

Please call ahead or check the website for directions, information about collections, reading room policies, holiday hours, and special events.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



A mecca for scholars and academics, the MHS constitutes one of the nation's greatest historical repositories. This group knows the Society as a haven for research. Traditional researchers travel through the familiar gateway of our imposing lobby to access our collections in Ellis Hall, also known as the reading

room. But scholars and researchers are not the only ones to grace our doorway or benefit from our collections.

Seeking to engage a wider audience, we encourage all to enter our majestic building to view an exhibition, enjoy a lecture or public program, and even enter the sanctuary of the reading room. We want more individuals to find enrichment and pleasure in the study of history, discovering their country's past along the way. Our efforts are beginning to bear fruit as can be seen in growing use of the reading room and the diversity of researchers. An upward trend in users began in 2010, and between 2011 and 2012 there was an approximately 20 percent increase in researchers. This last year has also seen the largest number of high school and "unaffiliated," or nonacademic, researchers.

Rising visitor numbers have led us to improve the lobby, making it both more efficient for researchers wishing to use the reading room and more welcoming for the general public. To accommodate researchers, we are returning to its original purpose the receiving room to the right of the entrance. Now renamed the Orientation Room, it provides a quiet space for new researchers to register and learn about the library's policies. The front hall now addresses the needs of the more casual visitor. Prior to the changes, some first-time visitors found the space intimidating and cold. The Society responded to this concern with plans to provide seating, warmer lighting, and an introductory exhibition on the history and work of the Society. The new front desk also serves as a hub for improved security. Details are provided in the article on page eight.

In the coming months you will see additional efforts to increase and diversify our audience. Our programs will include more offerings that appeal to intellectually curious adults, a key constituency. Our future depends on helping a large, diverse audience understand the value that history can bring to their lives, and the important role the MHS plays in preserving and presenting that history.

—Dennis A. Fiori

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*Top: ring, 1848, containing the braided hair of Pres. John Quincy Adams. Bottom: ring, made in 1747, commemorating the death of Mary Belcher.*

eration. Similarly, two lockets on display contain the treasured hair of other American heroes: George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. For each of these, the nation turned out in deep public mourning, and examples of other keepsakes produced for their funerals will also be on display.

Visitors can study exquisite jewelry from all of these periods, as well as other typical styles, at the exhibition, which will be open now through the end of January 2013. A full-color, extensively illustrated companion volume published by the MHS is also available and can be purchased online or on-site at the Society. Curators' gallery talks will take place on November 15 and December 7 at 2 PM; check the Society's website for details.

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*Louisa Catherine Adams portrait by Edward Savage, painted in 1794. Courtesy of the Adams National Historical Park.*

## NEW LOUISA CATHERINE ADAMS PUBLICATION IN STORES SOON

First Lady Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams has remained silent for more than 150 years behind three giants of American letters—John, Abigail, and John Quincy Adams. Now she finally takes center stage with the publication of the two-volume *Diary and Autobiographical Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams (1778–1849)* in January 2013.

Louisa was born in London in 1775 to a Maryland merchant and his English wife. In these writings, she recalls her privileged European childhood and education, her courtship and marriage to the dashing John Quincy, and their subsequent diplomatic postings to Berlin, St. Petersburg, and London.

In 1801, Louisa arrived in America. At first she shrinks behind the opinionated and strong-willed Adams family, but over time her writings reveal a reluctant yet increasingly canny political wife. She makes sharp observations about the tangled political affairs of Napoleonic Europe and sectional America, with witty sketches of heroes and scoundrels in the seats of government. Courtesans, empresses, belles, servants, friends, and her six sisters all feature in her writing. John Quincy emerges in a richness seldom seen—ambitious and exacting, yet passion-

ate, generous, and gallant. Louisa's diaries conclude with her reckoning of an eventful life, which came to a close in 1852.

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## ADAMS PAPERS SUMMER ACTIVITIES

This summer for the Adams Papers staff, school was in! Encouraged by the first wave of opportunities made possible by the Society's Andrew W. Mellon professional development grant, Adams Papers editors were able to spend the summer months completing an exciting range of courses offsite. Whether the focus was on learning cutting-edge digital techniques, sampling new British resources for American history-writing, or honing the craft of documentary editing, each staff member returned to Boylston Street with a new set of skills to support the work of the editorial project, which will mark 60 years of production in 2014.

Sara Sikes, the Adams Papers assistant editor for digital projects, attended a project management workshop at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute at the University of Victoria, B.C. She was awarded a scholarship to cover the cost of tuition and fees at this year's institute of over 400 participants from across disciplines and around the globe. In July, Ms. Sikes attended the European Summer School in Digital Humanities at the Universität Leipzig in Germany, where she participated in a course on XML markup and document structuring. To cover the cost of travel, accommodations, and meals, she received a bursary from the Volkswagen Foundation.

Assistant Editor Sara Georgini attended two weeks' worth of intensive seminars on the histories of mapping and paleography at London Rare Books School, for which the London-based Antiquarian Booksellers Association awarded her a bursary. Throughout late June and early July, she joined fellow students and expert tutors for hands-on sessions with archival materials at the British Museum, the British Library, and the University of London's Slade School of Fine Art. "The next volume of *The Papers of John Adams*, our 17th in the series, will feature a series of encoded letters between John Adams

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*Right: In this letter to Benjamin Lincoln written from Mount Vernon on February 5, 1785, George Washington provides news of recent legislation in the state assemblies of Virginia and Maryland aiming to make the Potomac River more navigable. Washington was instrumental in the success of the legislation, which resulted in the incorporation of the Potomac Company. The letter is a recent gift to the MHS from Dr. Susan Crosby Scrimshaw, a Lincoln descendant, in memory of Clara Crosby Ware Goodrich. The MHS houses the papers of Benjamin Lincoln, who served with Washington in the Continental Army and as the first secretary of war under the Articles of Confederation.*

Mount Vernon Feb 7<sup>th</sup> 1785

My dear Sir,

Not until within these few days have I been favored with your letter of the 18<sup>th</sup> of October introductory of M<sup>r</sup>. Porter. — I beg you to be persuaded, that I shall have pleasure in showing him every civility in my power, whilst he makes this Depot the place of his residence, as I shall to any other to whom you may give letters recommendatory. —

A few days ago I received from on board some vessel in the Harbour of Alexandria, two Cheeses, & a barrel of Crabberries (wrote thereon May<sup>r</sup>. Rice) unaccompanied by a letter, but said to be a present from you. — If this be the fact, I pray you to accept my thanks for this token of your recollection of me, or to offer them to May<sup>r</sup>. Rice, if the barrel came from him. —

We have nothing stirring in this quarter worthy of observation except the passing of two acts by the Assemblies of Virginia and Maryland (exactly similar) for improving & extending the navigation of the River Potomack from tide water as high up as it shall be found practicable, & communicating it by good land with the nearest navigable waters to the westward. — which acts, in their consequences, may be of great political

new acquisition

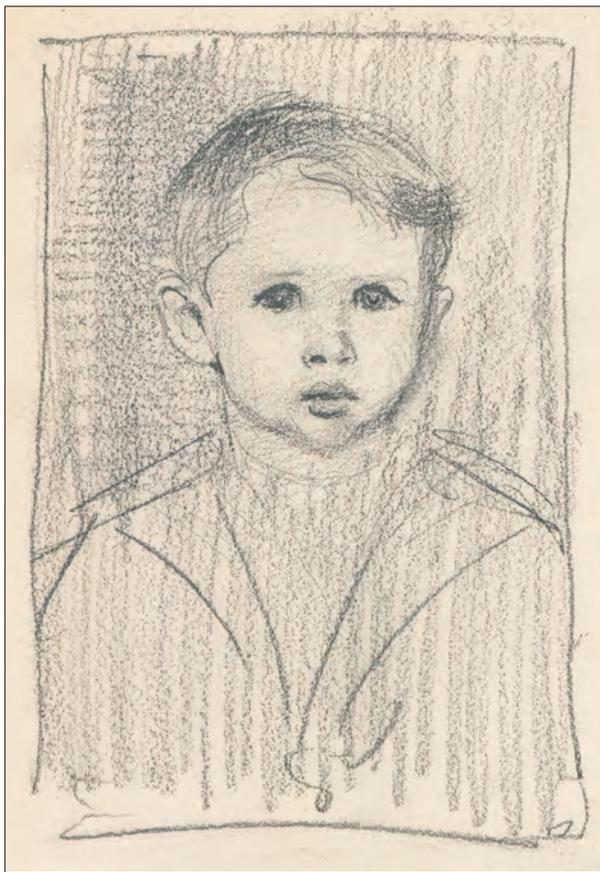
and Thomas Jefferson, so acquiring that historical context on handwriting and the use of symbol systems is essential to our work,” Ms. Georgini said. “On a related note, we are developing ways to share our many reference resources about the well-traveled Adams family with a broader audience.”

In August, Adams staff member Caitlin Christian-Lamb gathered with colleagues in Charlottesville, Va., for the 41st Institute for Editing Historical Documents. The Institute, a week-long certificate course funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, was organized by Beth Luey, Adams Papers assistant editor and education director of the Association for Documentary Editing.

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## NEW COLLECTIONS OPEN FOR RESEARCHERS

“because my father lived his soul  
love is the whole and more than all”



*Charles Hopkins's 1898 pencil sketch of Edward Estlin Cummings. The portrait is part of the MHS collections. The lines from “my father moved through dooms of love” from COMPLETE POEMS: 1904–1962 by E.E. Cummings, edited by George J. Firmage. Copyright 1940, (c) 1968, 1991 by the Trustees for the E. E. Cummings Trust. Used by permission of Liveright Publishing Corporation.*

E. E. Cummings wrote these closing lines in a 1939 poem about his father, Edward Cummings, a Unitarian minister and champion of social justice in early-20th-century Boston. With support from the Peck Stacpoole Foundation, the papers of Edward Cummings and his family have been processed and are now available to researchers. The collection includes Edward Cummings’s sermons, writings, and rich correspondence with his family and with mentor Edward Everett Hale. We were also delighted to discover a series of childhood correspondence and artwork by Cummings’s son, Edward Estlin, showcasing the poet’s early experiments with words and illustration. You can find the collection guide for the Cummings-Clarke family papers at <http://www.masshist.org/findingaids/doc.cfm?fa=fa0367>

Also newly processed, the records of the Massachusetts Audubon Society contain over 100 record cartons of documents that chronicle the organization from its founding in 1897 as the first Audubon Society in the country through the 20th century as it became a leader in environmental education and advocacy. The collection holds the society’s administrative records, as well as the records of many of Mass Audubon’s sanctuaries and over 100 years of the society’s publications. We anticipate that the collection will continue to grow as additional sanctuaries add their records. View the collection guide at <http://www.masshist.org/findingaids/doc.cfm?fa=fa0368>

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## NEH AWARDS HIGHLIGHT WEALTH OF PROJECTS & MHS RESOURCES

The meeting was bittersweet: on a cold day in early February, a national panel convened at the MHS to award MHS-NEH Long-term Fellowships underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities. These prestigious awards will allow three scholars to take up residence at the MHS for periods of 4 to 12 months. The committee reviewed more than 30 proposals submitted by accomplished colleagues who hail from throughout the United States.

There was an embarrassment of riches in the proposed projects, which ranged from studies of culture to capitalism, from gender to globalization, and from the



colonial period to postwar America. Yet the excellence of the scholars' proposals was equally matched by the quality of material available to them in the MHS archives. Scholar after scholar made his or her case for the necessity of collections as popular as the Adams Papers and as obscure as those of Continental Army widow and pension applicant Caroline Eustis.

With dismay that they could not fund more projects, the committee selected several stellar proposals to receive funding. Kristin Collins of the Boston University School of Law is studying how public entitlements such as federal pensions have shaped the institution of marriage. Matthew Dennis of the University of Oregon is conducting research on the political potency of American relics beginning in the colonial period. Martha Hodes of New York University is investigating personal responses to the assassination of Pres. Abraham Lincoln.

We are excited to host these colleagues in a perfect melding of scholarly sophistication and primary sources. Prof. Collins, Dr. Dennis, and Dr. Hodes took up residence in September.

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## ELECTION OF 1912 EXHIBITION

On September 4 the MHS opened *In the Arena: The Presidential Election of 1912 in Massachusetts*, an exhibition on what many called *the* election of the 20th century. In the election of 1912, not two, not three, but four major candidates from distinct political parties ran for president. Theodore Roosevelt, running with the Progressive "Bull Moose" Party, became the strongest third-party candidate

in American history, and Eugene V. Debs gained the most support ever for a Socialist candidate.

Roosevelt opposed his own handpicked successor in the election of 1912. Roosevelt had left presidential office in 1908, throwing his support behind fellow Republican William Howard Taft's successful bid for the presidency. But Roosevelt supported financial reform and became increasingly dissatisfied with Pres. Taft's pro-business, anti-regulation policies. He ran against Taft in the 1912 Republican primaries on a Progressive platform, which supported a reduced workday, an end to child labor, pro-

gressive inheritance and income taxes, and environmental conservation. Taft defeated Roosevelt in the primary due to what Roosevelt believed was party manipulation of the election. Undeterred, Roosevelt continued his presidential campaign on the Progressive "Bull Moose" Party ticket.

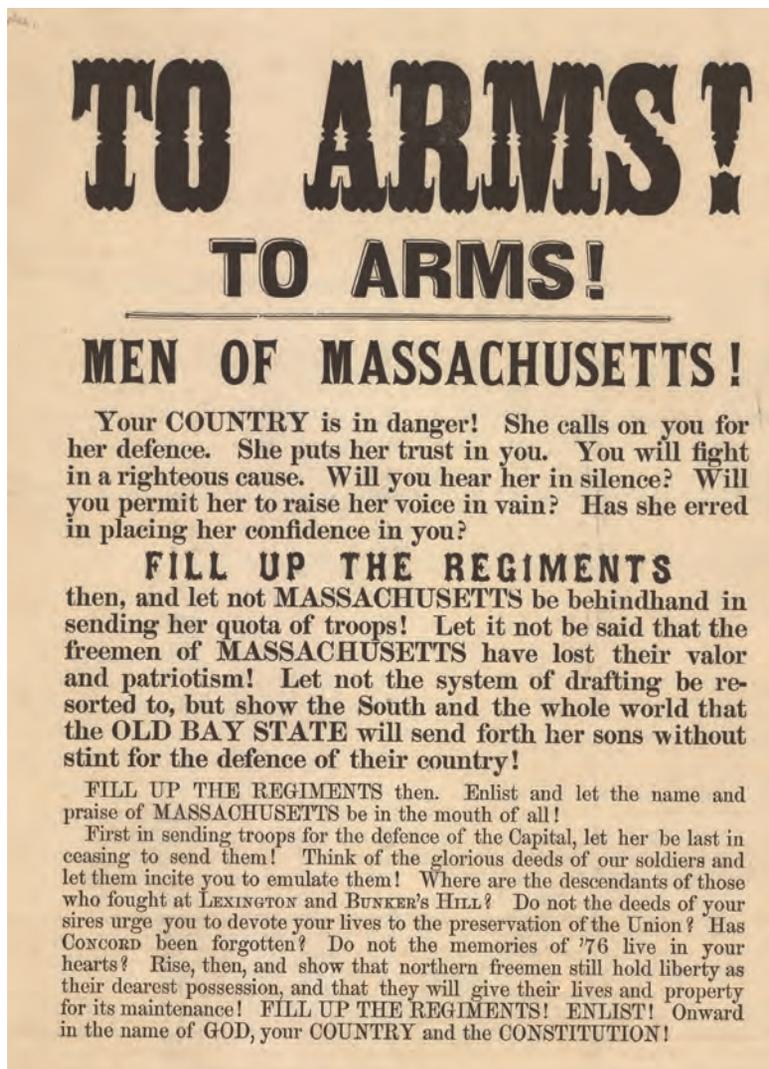
The candidates from all four parties—the Republican, Democratic, Progressive, and Socialist—campaigning in Massachusetts. Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson won the state. With the Republican vote split between Taft and Roosevelt, and 6 percent of the vote going to Socialist candidate Debs, Wilson also won the national election with a plurality of 42 percent of the vote to become the next president of the United States.

*In the Arena* includes photographs, political memorabilia, broadsides, political pins and buttons, letters, and pamphlets from this exciting campaign. The feature of the exhibition is a set of letters and telegrams exchanged between Roosevelt and MHS Member Henry Cabot Lodge, a Republican senator from Massachusetts who was a close friend of Roosevelt's but not a political supporter. The exhibition is free and open to the public. It runs through November 27.



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Above, left: campaign button from the presidential election of 1912 supporting the Progressive "Bull Moose" Party. Right: engraving of Pres. Theodore Roosevelt.



*Broadside calling for men of Massachusetts to join the Union army.*

## CIVIL WAR CONFERENCE

Save the Date! As part of the Society's multi-year observance of the tragic conflict that reshaped American society and politics, we are presenting the scholarly conference *Massachusetts and the Civil War: The Commonwealth and National Disunion* from April 4 to 6, 2013.

The program will begin on Thursday evening with a keynote address by Prof. John Stauffer, a member of Harvard's English Department and the chair of the university's graduate program on the History of American Civilization. Prof. Stauffer will speak on the contribution of the Bay State's black and white abolitionists and political leaders to secession, freedom, and equality under the law. He will also discuss briefly how the state responded to the "counter-Revolution" that stripped away these new rights after Reconstruction. The conference keynote and reception will be free and open to the public.

Prof. Stauffer's lecture will open a conference that will consider almost every major aspect of Massachu-

setts's participation in the war: reform activities and the origins of the war; military life; the war, politics, and the economy; slavery and emancipation; and how the citizens of Massachusetts came to terms with the consequences of the conflict. It will feature established scholars as well as up-and-coming historians who will tackle new areas of emphasis, including the radical intellectual tradition, health and the environment, and the memory of the war.

Conference papers will be made available in advance to those who preregister. In six sessions on Friday and Saturday, panelists and commentators will offer brief remarks; a discussion with the audience will follow. Online registration will be available on the MHS website ([www.masshist.org/conferences](http://www.masshist.org/conferences)) this winter.

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## EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN

### *Renovations at the MHS*

The grandeur of the entrance to 1154 Boylston Street, with its expansive lobby and winding marble staircase, is one of the most recognizable features of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Recently completed renovations to this space preserved its beauty while creating a more inviting, welcoming atmosphere for visitors of all types, from scholars and researchers to educators, students, and casual visitors.

The unveiled lobby features a new reception desk, an updated restroom facility with handicapped accessibility, expanded coat storage and visitor lockers, and a current events and exhibition video display. Fresh paint adorns the walls, and improved lighting brightens the lobby. The ramp to the reading room has been enhanced to create expanded separate gallery space. Other anticipated features include donor recognition plaques, new seating, and collection displays with information about the Society and current exhibitions.

Tellalian Association of Architects and Planners and Shawmut Construction completed the project in September, and the work did not prevent visitors from viewing the galleries or visiting the library. During this time, the workers also made renovations to the Publications office area on the third floor.

In its ongoing effort to make the collections accessible to all, the Society anticipates another change to the building with the opening of the Presidential Gallery on the second floor. The first exhibition in that space opens in January 2013. It will focus on Pres. Abraham Lincoln and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.

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# MHS *fund*

## Creation of New MHS Fund

This fall the Massachusetts Historical Society is announcing the creation of the new MHS Fund to its Fellows, Members, and friends. An annual campaign, the MHS Fund will provide essential unrestricted support for the Society's mission to collect, preserve, and share the documents that define America's past. The Fund makes it possible for the MHS to be a leader in promoting the study of American history by making its unparalleled collections accessible to students, teachers, historians, and the general public through its publications, exhibitions, teacher workshops, and public and scholarly programs, as well as the growing online resources available to people around the world at [www.masshist.org](http://www.masshist.org).

The Society welcomes gifts of all amounts to the MHS Fund. Donors of \$500 or more will join the Society's most generous supporters in one of six new Giving Circles, named for Revolutionary-era patriots whose papers feature in MHS collections. Giving Circle members will enjoy access to exclusive social and educational events, behind-the-scenes tours, local and international travel programs, and much more. A contribution at any Giving Circle level also will bring all the benefits of MHS membership.

To learn more about the MHS Fund or the Giving Circles, their namesakes, and privileges, visit [www.masshist.org/support](http://www.masshist.org/support) or contact Katy Capó at [kcapo@masshist.org](mailto:kcapo@masshist.org) or 617-646-0518.

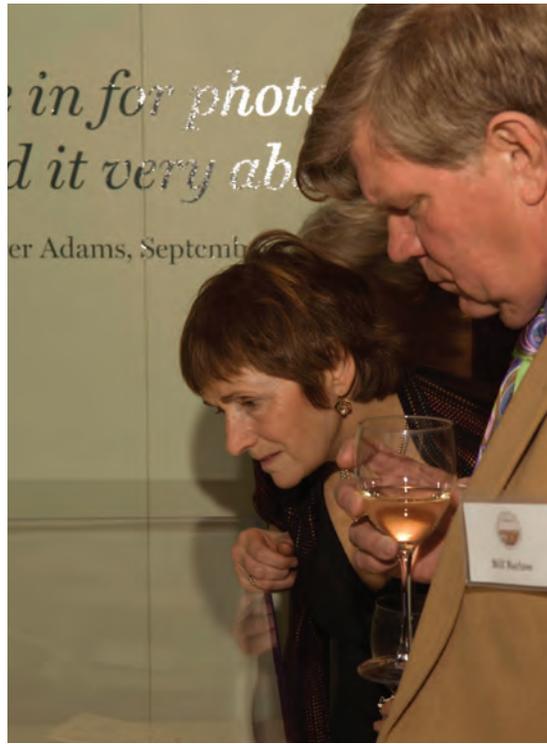
## Fellowship Deadlines

Researchers who wish to apply for grant funding to support visits to the MHS of a month or more will want to observe these application deadlines: January 15, 2013, for MHS-NEH Long-term Fellowships; February 1, 2013, for the New England Regional Fellowship Consortium program; February 15, 2013, for the Suzanne and Caleb Loring Fellowship; and March 1, 2013, for MHS Short-term Fellowships. For more information, see the flyers in this issue, or visit [www.masshist.org/fellowships](http://www.masshist.org/fellowships).





On February 8, 2012, the Society welcomed 154 guests to the preview of its winter exhibition *A Gilded and Heartbreaking Life: The Photographs of Clover Adams, 1883–1885* and the launch of Natalie Dykstra's book, *Clover Adams: A Gilded and Heartbreaking Life*, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. The exhibition featured the striking photographs of Marian "Clover" Hooper Adams along with letters, the notebook she used to record information about her photography, and correspondence with friends and family. Following remarks by guest curator and author Natalie Dykstra, guests were invited to view the exhibition and enjoy the reception.



Left: Fellow, guest curator, and author Natalie Dykstra signs a book for guest Louisa Thoron, a Hooper descendant. Above: Fellow Bill Barlow and Annie Thompson enjoy the exhibition. Photos by Laura Wulf.



Above: Trustees Nancy Anthony, Sheila Perry, and Judith Bryant Wittenberg enjoy the reception. Right: immediate past Board Chair Bill Clendaniel, Kennedy Medal recipient and MHS Corresponding Fellow Gordon Wood, and Pres. Dennis Fiori pose for a picture. Photos by Stu Rosner.



On April 11, 2012, more than 20 guests enjoyed an evening of financial history at the MHS. The event, part of an occasional series produced in conjunction with the Society's forthcoming volume on the history of investment management in Boston, featured MHS-NEH Long-term Research Fellow Joshua R. Greenberg. He used a number of fascinating items in the Society's collections to illustrate the history of U.S. currency from the Revolution to the Civil War. He explained that currency was not standardized during this period, which led to a number of interesting situations and market chaos.

Above: Member Charles Flather and Board Chair Charles Ames converse with MHS-NEH Long-term Research Fellow and presenter Joshua Greenberg. Left: Trustee Joseph Peter Spang and Member Benjamin Fawcett enjoy the reception with MHS Pres. Dennis Fiori. Photos by Laura Wulf.



Approximately 125 Fellows and Members attended the Society's Annual Meeting followed by a program and reception honoring Gordon S. Wood, the 11th recipient of the Society's John F. Kennedy Medal. Prof. Wood spoke about the way in which history

writing has divided between the academics who write for one another and the growing numbers of popular nonacademic historians who write for the general reading public. A video of his talk is available on our website.

## ANNUAL MEETING & KENNEDY MEDAL CEREMONY MAY 16, 2012

The Society's Annual Open House took place on Saturday, June 16, and featured a preview of the exhibition *Mr. Madison's War: The Controversial War of 1812*. Visitors participated in tours, listened to gallery talks, and enjoyed refreshments, while learning more about the Society's collections, programs, and services.

*Below: guests preview Mr. Madison's War during the Open House. Right: the Shepard Brooks Saltonstall cannon intrigues visitors of all ages. Photos by Carol Knauff.*



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## Why a bull moose?



During Theodore Roosevelt's 1912 presidential campaign on the Progressive Party ticket he famously said he was "fit as a bull moose" after being shot before a Milwaukee political speech. Learn more about this contentious election on page seven.