



THE ANNISQUAM  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

34 Leonard St  
Annisquam MA 01930

### Visit the Museum

The Firehouse will be open to the public between June 5 and October 12, from 3 to 5 PM on Mondays and 7 to 9 PM on Thursdays or by Appointment.

Contact:

[avhistorical@gmail.com](mailto:avhistorical@gmail.com) or  
978-381-3141.

### Admission

Admission is free but donations are gratefully accepted.



SPRING 2017

## Annisquam Man Invented the Light Bulb Before Thomas Edison?

By David McAweeney

This article is taken from *The Inventor and the Inventor's Son* published by Anthony J. Marolda in 2007.

Dr. Isaac Adams, Jr., the man for whom Adams Hill in Annisquam is named, was a wealthy American inventor and the son of another wealthy inventor.

He was living in Cambridge when some of his Cambridge neighbors who already owned summer homes in Annisquam invited him to visit. He was taken with the village and purchased property that covered most of what we now know as Adams Hill. The area then was mostly treeless and devoid of human structures. He built his summer home in 1871 at the top of the hill. He had a 270° view from Lobster cove to Ipswich bay that included the Annisquam River marshes. The house still stands on the original location and is owned by the Gorton family. Part of the building including the tower was moved across the street to the DeBlois house where it now stands.

Dr. Adams graduated from Harvard Medical School in 1862. At the time the Civil War was raging, and partially to avoid the planned draft his father sent him to Paris to study.

In Paris Dr. Adams did work on advanced medical practices, but he focused his efforts in electrochemistry. He became proficient in producing Geissler tubes that produced light for surgical procedures. It was about this time that he began experiments with incandescent lighting.

Dr. Adams' House About 1880



Upon returning to America Dr. Adams established a medical practice but quickly turned to inventing following in the footsteps of his father. He started a business manufacturing and selling Geissler tubes. At the same time he undertook experiments with incandescent lighting. He did produce a carbon filament lamp in 1865. He kept extensive notes on his experimenting that were used much later in patent disputes over lighting technology.

His experimenting led him to develop techniques for nickel plating. In 1866 he obtained a patent for the process he developed. Thus began his great business success as the demand for nickel-plated products grew. Dr. Adams collected license royalties for the use of his technology.

In 1866 and 1867 Dr. Adams continued to work on the incandescent lamp. He was a meticulous experimenter and kept extensive notes. In 1868 after a trip to Europe where he explored potential markets for an incandescent lamp he concluded that to be a commercial success he would need to supply power to customers. He had neither time nor money to do this so he abandoned his invention without filing for a patent.

In 1879 Thomas Edison patented his own technology for the incandescent bulb. Edison had made the first practical lamp and he built the first lighting and distribution system that used lamps to light houses over large areas.

In 1890 United States Electric, a company that manufactured light bulbs and owned many electrical patents, challenged Edison's patent in court. They called Dr. Adams as an expert witness and used his notes and testimony to show that Dr. Adams preceded Edison in the development of the first bulb. In 1891 the court found that the systems approach was the key to a successful light bulb and awarded full patent rights to Edison.

*Anthony Marolda's book is available from Amazon.com and from the Annisquam History Museum. Marolda lives on Adams Hill in the former home of Isaac Adam's daughter.*

# Great progress made in preservation of and access to photo collection

**A report of the current status of the Annisquam Historical Society Museum digitization project ( April 2017)**

**Prepared by David Teele and Betsey Horovitz**



The Annisquam History Society owns an extraordinary collection of images dating back to the beginning of photography, although the great majority dates from circa 1870 onwards. Some are negatives; some are prints; many exist in both formats.

Collectively they form a portrait of a place in time. As Annisquam attracted painters, it also attracted photographers. Handling, accidents, and fungi all pose a threat to their work. Additionally, the photographic materials themselves deteriorate over the decades. Converting these photographs to a digital format makes them immortal.

The bulk of the material still resides in the old Annisquam Village Firehouse, although the Cape Ann Museum holds hundreds of negatives taken by Martha Hale Harvey, a notable and pioneering photographer from Annisquam.

Nearly two years ago we began to scan the photographs from the Firehouse, beginning with negatives on glass (glass plate negatives) and continuing with the hundreds of prints. Along the way we were blessed with a gift of nearly 150 additional glass plates from Sarah Hackett. These plates, combined with others we already had, form a picture of our village through the seasons and decades.

## **Ours goals include:**

- digitization (scanning)
- storing the negatives and prints in archival containers
- creation of a computerized database describing the work
- making the images accessible to visitors and researchers
- creating archival quality prints, the sale of which generates funds to support this project

**Progress to date:** (next page)

All of the work by Martha Harvey held by the Cape Ann Museum has been scanned and catalogued. We owe a special debt to Jane Harris and to Fred Buck.

Approximately 2000 images from the Firehouse have been scanned.

This is a work in progress, and we have considerable work yet to do.

### **Accessibility:**

When the Firehouse is open, please stop in. Now we have many hundreds of laser prints organized by accession number only.

We hope soon to have a computer available that will allow visitors to browse through the collection or view images arranged by categories, such as vessels, portraits, yachting, or streets. With the help of the volunteer staff, the database will be searchable.

Finally, we have a modest collection of some our best images printed to a high standard to help visitors understand the remarkable quality of the large glass plate negatives. Most of these are for sale, by arrangement.

Special Note: The quality of the image in some of these glass plates is astonishing. In the image below, when it has been enlarged, one can count the hairs on the lower lip of the horse and see the details of the dog-eared notebook in the driver's breast pocket. See what else you can find!



*Wintertime delivery to the general store located in the Village Hall, circa 1900*



## Along River Road Is a pretty abode

Along River Road  
Is a pretty abode  
Where reside two ladies so fair.  
But Fannie and Grace  
Show nary a trace  
Of their age save a spot of  
gray hair.

For forty-odd years  
These two little dears  
Have worked for the Circle in Squam.  
They've never neglected  
Nor even objected  
To dues which they've paid  
Without qualm.

Though they never would ask  
To be spared of a task  
We want to reward their devotion.  
We ladies believed  
That for what they achieved  
We should grant them a form of promotion.

Their membership station or classification  
Is not to be OrdINary  
The way is all paved  
For the dues to be waived:  
As members they're now

HONORARY

Mrs. Grace Chard and Miss Fannie Ellis lived in Annisquam for many years until about 1978. They lived across the street from the Village Market.

This poem was sent to us by Mary Ryder of Plano, Texas. She is a niece of Grace Chard and was in Annisquam last year to attend a family funeral.

According to the newspaper clipping (circa 1976) that came with it, the poem was written by Mrs. Hollis S. French and was read at the annual luncheon of the Annisquam Sewing Circle held at the home of Mrs. Paul B. Sargent on Highland Avenue.

Miss Margaret Norton made each of the ladies a plaque with a hand-lettered message and individual border.

Mrs Chard was not present, but her sister, Miss Ellis, accepted corsages of pink sweetheart roses for them both.

Mrs Chard and Miss Ellis had been members of the Circle since 1925 and 1926 respectively. Both were made honorary members at the meeting—meaning they no longer were expected to pay dues. However, they were expected to carry on with their duties.

After a buffet luncheon of dishes provided by the 45 members present the group adjourned until early October.



The Chard House on River Road Circa 1885

# Mary Ellen Lepionka Departs

Mary Ellen Lepionka has ended her extensive volunteer work for the Annisquam Historical Society in order to pursue some of her many other interests.

Mary Ellen, who lives in East Gloucester, first came into contact with the Historical Society a few years ago after attending a meeting of the Annisquam History Discussion Group. She quickly contacted Tom O'Keefe and volunteered to take on the Herculean project of identifying and recording the thousands of items in the museum collection.

About this time the Village Hall Association became concerned that Tom O'Keefe might be retiring and wanted a plan for the continued operation of the museum. A small committee was appointed, and Mary Ellen ably supported its members. She also took on the management of the museum.

Under Mary Ellen's direction the museum was cleaned, the collection was organized, relationships with other museums such as the Cape Ann Museum were established, grant applications were submitted and funded, the board was expanded and trained, fragile items requiring climate-controlled conditions were moved to the Cape Ann Museum, and classes in textile preservation were held. The Massachusetts Archives sent an archivist to show volunteers how to care for historically significant items.

A measure of professionalism and pride is now imbued in the volunteers who work in the museum. The path to the future is much clearer. For all this we owe Mary Ellen a very big **thank you**.



## Volunteers Needed

The Museum needs volunteers to help take charge of the Museum on Monday afternoons and Thursday evenings when the museum is open. We always prefer that two staffers be present at those times.

This is an excellent opportunity to learn what the museum is all about in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. You will be paired with one of our more experienced volunteers.

Contact:

**avhistorical@gmail.com or  
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## World War I Project Planned

Robert Griffith, a history museum steering committee member, is planning a WWI commemoration for this July.

He is seeking WWI memorabilia, records, memoirs and reminiscences from Annisquam Families. He is also looking for help in identifying Annisquam names among the war records of Gloucester people who served in the war.

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# 19th Century Architectural Jewel Restored

By Holly Clay Smith

Christine and Paul Lundberg will receive a Gloucester Historical Commission Award in May for the restoration of their landmark home at 5 Bridgewater Street in Annisquam.

The house, shown below in photos dated from about 1890, was built in 1866 according to records in the Annisquam Historical Society Museum.

The house was occupied by the Jewett family for many years. Marion Carpenter Wallace wrote the popular Annisquam book, *Summer Magic*, describing her childhood summer holidays at her Grandfather Jewett's home at the bridge.

Paul Lundberg's parents purchased the house and land across the street in 1952.



Photo courtesy of Christine and Paul Lundberg





Bill Remsen, a registered architect, is assessing the firehouse windows. Bill lives on River Road and recently joined the History museum steering committee.



Holly Clay Smith is working on some Museum files on Spring Clean up Day.