To Our Dear Valued Members,

A while back many of you responded to our members’ survey asking about how we were doing, and what ideas and programs could make us even stronger. Many of you suggested that the Historical Society work and collaborate more with other Acton groups and non-profits on joint initiatives.

One group that we have been talking to about possibly coordinating some activities is the Iron Work Farm (IWF). As many of you know, IWF and AHS are both non-profit historical organizations dedicated to the preservation, exhibition, and promotion of the history of Acton, Massachusetts. Like us, they were founded by volunteers and amateur historians whose interest in the past was matched by their desire to preserve and celebrate Acton. Although our groups have distinct activities and cultures, they also overlap and have complementary programs.

Both organizations are challenged by limited resources and are trying to stay relevant to our existing members and engage new communities. We both need to update our programs and take advantage of opportunities such as apps and social media.

The Boards of both groups are looking not to merge, but to discuss which types of programs, publicity, and cross-support could be coordinated better. One proposal is to form an Oversight Committee with representatives of the two groups to coordinate, plan, and guide some of these joint activities.

We would like to hear from you about your thoughts on this.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Bill Klauer and Doug Herrick*
Herb was born in Concord in 1924. He was a Navy veteran from WWII. After his military service he worked in banking. He lived with his wife, Ruth, and their children in West Acton. Herb and his wife were members of the Acton Historical Society for many years and often helped with AHS Patriots Day celebrations.

At the convenience of the family, a celebration of Herb’s life will be at a later time.

**Upcoming AHS Events**

**Holiday Party--Members Only**
Hosmer House
Sunday December 1st
2-4PM

Members' families very welcome!
Please RSVP to Jenks via phone (978-264-0690) or in person (Monday or Wednesday 9-11 AM) or via email: jenkslibrary@verizon.net.

If you are coming, please bring something to share:

A- M Last names Bring Appetizer

N - Z Last names Bring Dessert

Please RSVP to Jenks Library with the choice you are bringing, if you know it. That will help us fill in what is needed (more desserts?!). See you there!
PARTICIPATE IN THE
HOLIDAY
MINI-FAIR

Saturday, December 7, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.  Acton Memorial Library
Snow Date: December 14

Acton Historical Society will be at the AML Mini Fair again! Come and join us and get in some holiday shopping as you look over the tables filled with various gifts. AHS will be there selling:

- Mugs with scenes of old Acton
- goat's milk soap
- books on Acton history
- Acton magnets, tea towels, tiles
- Acton Christmas ornaments
- Acton postcards

McCarthy-Towne School Visit -- In early November, AHS once again hosted a group of second graders as they toured the Hosmer House and learned about life in Acton long ago. Their inquisitive natures, smiles and comments always remind us that the Jonathan Hosmer House has had many years of children's energy within its walls.

AHS at Acton Farmer's Market

AHS took part in the Farmer's Market in mid-October, so we escaped the summer's heat. Our members brought along a wooden butter churn from Hall Brothers in West Acton, a wooden cigar mold from Knowlton's on Mass Ave, and other items from Acton's past. Walkers delighted in looking at these items and asking questions. Our group, as always, did their best to provide answers!

Also, several Acton related mugs, books, and soaps were sold. A fun day all around!
A Tip of the Hat! exhibit

A Hermit's Demise: Rumors and Consequences in 1870's Acton program

The last Sunday of October, AHS had both an exhibit and a program.

A Tip of the Hat! exhibit was earlier in the afternoon, and was well attended, with attendees marveling at the many types of hats presented. Thank you to Barbara Head for putting together this wonderful exhibit! If you missed it, you will have another chance during the Members’ Holiday Party.

The program, A Hermit's Demise: Rumors and Consequences in 1870's Acton told the story of Aaron Woods, a hermit whose death generated intense speculation and national news coverage in the 1870s. Jenks Library was full as Bill Klauer gave a PowerPoint presentation and explained the many rumors and newspaper articles that occurred after the death of Mr. Woods. After the presentation, a brief question and answer period brought up further information on this time in Acton's history.

A New Acquisition: Lois Robbins' Sampler Finds a New Home

The Society recently received a donation from one of our members of a beautiful sampler “wrought by Lois Robbins aged 13.” On it, Lois had embroidered flowers and cross-stitched the birthdates of her family. We wanted to know more about Lois, but we only uncovered very basic information. Transcribed town records state that she was born on Dec. 5, 1820 to Abel and Mary Robbins, in Acton. The year does not match the birth year of 1821 given on her sampler. Wondering if there were a typo in the transcription, we checked Acton’s early handwritten birth records. Lois and her sister Mary’s births were recorded together. While Mary’s birth date matched
the sampler, Lois’s own birth was indeed written as December 1820. (The exact day is smudged and indecipherable.) The sampler raises the possibility that the original town record of Lois’ birth contained an error that was copied into later vital records volumes and now will be repeated endlessly via the internet. (The alternative would be that Lois was mistaken about her own birthday on her sampler. Given that her parents were still alive when she worked on her sampler, that seems unlikely.)

Lois was reportedly 25 years old at the time of her Acton marriage to John Grimes, a local farmer, on Nov. 22, 1846. Sadly, Acton’s handwritten vital records reported that on Aug. 25, 1848 the “wife of John Grimes,” and daughter of Abel Robbins, died due to fever. On Sept. 27, 1848, a 3 month-old “child of John Grimes” died of “infantile.” Lois was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, where her stone’s inscription reads “LOIS ROBBINS WIFE OF JOHN GRIMES 1821-1848.” Her baby John is buried there as well.

Except in rare cases, resources for researching Acton residents of the 1820s-1840s, particularly women, are quite limited. We are delighted that young Lois Robbins’ creation was saved by the family and donated to the Society so that we have something tangible to remember her by. The sampler also reminds us that even historical records that seem clear proof of an event can sometimes be called into question.

If anyone can help us fill in any more details of her life, please contact us.

From the 1883 and 1884 Journal of Arthur Davis, Acton artist and Librarian:

November 27th, 1884:

Thanksgiving Day. Partly cloudy and partly clear. Tonight it is warmer and threatens to rain but the weather is very uncertain indeed. Finished covering my strawberries and the fall work is about through.

December 25th, 1883:

Christmas Day, of course. Home is the place to be at on such a day as this! Going over to the Hall to look at the dancers made me forget my writing.