



HANDI-NOTES



Fall 2014 Volume 6, Issue 1

(401)831-8339 www.handicraftclub.org

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HOLIDAY WORKSHOPS FOR MEMBERS' BUSY SCHEDULES

A number of cooking, decorating, gift-making workshops are open for members. Enroll now and enjoy what the Club has to offer.

FANTASTIC FOOD!

Totally Turkey - Soup, Salad, Pot Pie & More

Mary Hughes

Friday, November 7th, 9AM-12PM

FABULOUS FLOWERS!

Holiday Floral Arrangement

Candace Morgenstern

Friday, November 14th, 9AM-12PM

DAZZLING DECOR!

Origami Holiday Ornament

Kristin Coombs

Friday, December 5th, 9AM-12PM

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

This newsletter brings you greetings from your President and Board. The 10-week fall classes are almost over and Bobbie Binder and Izzy Goff are already working on new offerings for the winter session beginning the week of January 5.

Our fall programs for members and the public featured Susan Grimshaw, Tynietoy collector and lecturer, on September 29. Kudos to program co-chairs Trish Poirrier and Lois Lang, and Tynietoy co-chairs Margaret Lederer and Marilyn Shealy for such a great learning experience.

Perhaps the largest space in this issue relates to our historic house and plans for its improvement. In looking over our history I see that the house has often been viewed as a drain on the club rather than an asset. But since the advent of private foundation and government funding of Historic Preservation, many members, some even grant writers, seem to see the house as a charming asset. Please read both the profile of Kit Barnum, current House Chair, as well as the Landscape Design Update spearheaded by Sally Whitin.

Pat Ley has started a column to help members better understand our finances. Her first overview is well written in laymen 's language.

Lastly, in an effort to make you aware of policy changes, we will be including in our quarterly newsletters recent board decisions. Here are some new policies we've implemented:

- With teachers' permission, members can sign up for a half class session. This will help students who travel a lot and who are recovering from illnesses.
- The Holiday Party Silent Auction will be held every other year. It will not occur this December.
- Membership policies will include a reference to Board approval by email.
- Also, the Board is working on better use of the Club, including renting it out through a member. Send ideas to Jen Auber.

I personally welcome questions and ideas, so do not hesitate to contact me directly. I also welcome members who are not on the Board to attend any monthly Board meeting. Just let Jackie or me know you when you are coming.

Margie Edwards
President

Editor, Susan Tash

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HOLIDAY PARTY SET FOR DEC. 8, SMALL DOLLHOUSE IN AUCTION

The Club's annual Holiday Party is set for Monday, Dec. 8, 6-8 p.m. In keeping with the Club's interest in dollhouses and dollhouse furniture, the rustic dollhouse now on display in the entry will be auctioned off, along with Handicraft-made contents.

Also guests are invited to donate miniature furniture – not Tynietoy – to be auctioned. Proceeds will go towards future Club projects. For those looking to acquire miniature furniture to decorate a holiday table, place under a Christmas tree or to give as a holiday gift, this is where to find what you're looking for.

Leave donated furniture and your name with Jackie Hicks or Alyssa Short any time before the Dec. 8 party. A letter will be sent to you acknowledging your contribution. The miniature furniture is small, but the thank you for helping the Club is big.

Jen Auber, 2nd Vice President, notes that once again, as is tradition, Dennis Brown will be bartending this lively event and Tom's Market will be catering. Jackie Hicks and Henry Leite will also lend their capable hands.

If you are interested in helping to decorate the Club for the party please contact Jen Auber at jenauber@me.com or 401.258.5164. She needs a few capable people to help make the Club look as festive as the party is gay.



The small dollhouse to be auctioned off at the Holiday Party.

CLUB UNDERTAKES LANDSCAPE DESIGN PROJECT TO PROTECT, IMPROVE PROPERTY

A major survey, assessment and plan to improve the landscape design of the Handicraft Club have been authorized by the Board. Under the guidance of Sally Whiten, Garden Committee Chair, the Board has been appraised of a number of potentially hazardous conditions in the gardens of the house. Further, the Board is looking to beautify the grounds.

Sally interviewed four different landscape architecture and design companies and ultimately recommended Searle and Searle Landscape Architecture and Design to survey the property and make recommendations. They will be working with Corrie deBoer, an award-winning architect who in 1996 wrote a comprehensive report for the Club on existing conditions with recommendations for improvement. Searle and Searle has worked on Brown's Hillel House, Swan Point Cemetery and Roger Williams Botanical Gardens, among others.

"We want to make the property look as nice as the house," said Sally. What the Club hopes to accomplish is:

- Stairs to the members' door will have two groups of four stairs instead of three, making them easier to climb.
- The south side pavers are out of line making it treacherous for walking. The hope is to make one flat area where tables and chairs can be set up for events or for members to eat lunch.
- Redesign plantings to improve this area
- Install new wrought iron gates at the old carriage entrance replacing wood gates.
- Possibly install new underground retaining walls to keep the soil from eroding.
- Replace pavers in the walkway around the slope of the house. Cobblestones installed to stop erosion are moving down against the fence.
- At the front of the house's main entrance the steps are out of line and need to be realigned.

The Club has committed \$14,500 for a comprehensive plan to accomplish these and other tasks on the south, west and north sides of the building. The hope, says Sally, is to have a master plan which the Club can then divide into separate projects. She says the Club relies on grants and if the project is outlined in phases or stages, and we have a strategy for what should be accomplished in order, we can apply for grants for each project.

"The house is one of the things that makes us special," said Sally. "It's civilizing when you go into a house that's historic," she added.

She continued, "It's the gateway to College Hill. It stands on Benefit Street, across from the Athenaeum and down the hill from Brown's gates. It's a sentry, an official landmark and it should be spectacular. It should say welcome to Providence, this is who we are."

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KIT BARNUM

Kit Barnum combines soft southern charm and New York sensibility. She and her younger sister grew up in Atlanta with a mother, a Cooper Union graduate, who was a fashion illustrator and also had New York City in her blood.

At the ages of eight and four Kit and her sister started Saturday morning art classes at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, which her mother had been instrumental in starting and where her mother taught. Kit started with ceramics, then a design course (she says all 50s stuff, Arp amoeba-type forms) and marionette making. From art Kit went on to cello lessons at age 12 and then ballet. “You know what moms do to make a young lady out of you,” she said.



Kit Barnum and her Decorative Arts project.

She always wanted to be an architect. Kit attended the University of Georgia first as a business major, then found courses in interior design which captured her attention. While she was in college her folks moved back to New York City. Kit stayed in Georgia, living with relatives, until she went to NY to visit her parents. She thought it was “pretty great” and enrolled in the NY School of Interior Design.

After she got her degree, friends who were going to Europe talked Kit’s father into letting Kit join them. It was cheaper to split a car three ways, they reasoned. They were each given a certain amount of money for the trip but they were

so frugal staying in youth hostels that they could afford to stay in Europe April through September. Kit’s father found them in Switzerland through American Express and booked all three to come home on the Queen Mary. They still had money left.

With that money Kit financed an apartment in NY with the same two girls. Kit had a portfolio for interior design but had trouble getting a job because she didn’t have experience. At last she got a job at Schumacher, the fabric house. At Schumacher they took a chance on Kit – they were actually looking for a boy to lift heavy bolts and carry packages. Kit convinced them she could do everything a boy could do. Kit’s certain they hired her because she was so eager.

She was put on the floor with other young women, the job she wanted in the first place, hanging fabrics for display, being nice to decorators, finding things for them. But they had a public address system she was expected to use to announce guests or call for fabric. Kit was very shy and aware of her southern accent, so she convinced friends to take over that part of the job for her. She decided to learn to speak the way the other girls did. Most of them went to Farmington and Kit says that if they had been from Queens she would have an entirely different accent now.

After six months she was made co-manager of Schumacher’s 63rd Street showroom, largely because an octogenarian who had the job needed the help, she claims.

Sometime later someone at Eggers and Higgins Architecture asked a friend at Schumacher if they knew anyone who would be a good fit. Kit was recommended for the job. The day of her interview it poured rain and Kit was without an umbrella. “When I got there I was so wet I left soaking footprints on the carpet,” says Kit. “We hit it off and I got the job.” So Kit was at last in her first love, working as a designer for an architect.

She was there for four years and during that time she met and married the owner’s nephew. Her boss was jealous because she thought Kit was being groomed to take her job. She made life hard for Kit, so when the opportunity presented itself she left to join Bill Barnum’s firm, where she worked for three years. She moved to Florida with her husband, divorced and went back to NY and a job in Bill’s office. They subsequently married and have worked together at the family firm ever since.

They’ve concentrated on commercial work, though Kit to this day still does residential as well. Working on bank and

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law firms Kit would meet the chairs of boards and then they'd ask her to do the design of their own houses, so that's how she got into residential work. In New York their firm did all of the US Courthouse at 500 Pearl St. – 44 judges' chambers and courtrooms.

Sometime later Kit and Bill's firm moved to Greenwich, CT, where they raised their children. One day Bill and Kit were at a Brown/Yale football game lunch in Providence with friends who had a house on Williams Street. Bill thought the houses were charming and their friend suggested they look at some houses. They fell in love with 2 George Street, bought it immediately and worked for two years to make it just perfect to move in. It was 1997 when they finally moved to RI.

They always had ties to this part of New England. They'd inherited a house in Westport, MA many years earlier and spent summers there. It was Charlotte Underwood, who has a home in Westport Harbor, who introduced Kit to the Handicraft Club.

For twenty years while Kit lived in NYC she attended Isabel O'Neill Studios classes learning decorative painting. There everyone worked on the same project at the same time, there was no freedom of choice of projects. She learned everything about brush cleaning and preparation of paint – five coats, sand between each and make the surface glasslike and perfect. Disciplines were incredible at Isabel O'Neill, she notes. And with classes there at \$750 to \$1000 for eight sessions plus \$30 to park, Kit says classes at Handicraft Club are a bargain.

Kit has served as president of the Handicraft Club (2005-2007), and more recently she became house committee chair. Her many years of design and architecture work have served her and the Club well. She has many stories to tell about the maintenance and updating of the Club. Early on she oversaw replacing ancient boilers with help from a Champlin grant. Kit says Vivien Jones (president who succeeded Kit) had a friend who anonymously gave the Club \$100,000 because the carriage house was in dire need of a new roof. And looking at the entrance, the paint on the wood columns was so thick that it was cracked into rectangle shapes. She had the paint stripped to bare wood, and had everything that had rotted repaired. And that's just part of what needed to be done to restore the house, which had for years relied on the work of members' handymen.

To do this work Kit got bids and E. F. O'Donnell & Sons had the lowest bid (\$300,000) because they owned their own scaffolding. They were hired and Kit has been directing the work one project at a time. These included

stripping windows, rebuilding the balustrade (saved and patched where rotted), restoring the monitor, a box-like room on top that may have been used as a lookout for ships. The monitor was completely rotted and in "dreadful shape." One bidder wanted to replicate the entire balustrade, but O'Donnell saved it by removing the rot and patching.

"When we re-roofed the whole structure, O'Donnell lifted the whole monitor up three inches so snow wouldn't get trapped there," says Kit. "And the connector roof was just done," she adds. "Previously someone had put plywood over rotted timbers which continued to rot." Also the stairs going up to the dollhouse room were found to be resting on a sewer line so every time someone stepped on the stairs, they were putting pressure on a sewer line. Those were fixed this summer.

Those who know Kit and her beautiful work in Peggy Rodgers's decorative painting class know she will strip and repaint any one of the projects she's painted, no matter how close to the end she is, if it's not done perfectly. She says she feels the same way about the Handicraft Club house. "Do a first class job on the house because no one thanks you for saving the money if they don't like the end product," Kit notes.

She added, "We have the most wonderful facility at the Handicraft Club. There is nothing like it in the United States that I know of. You have to come from somewhere else to know what a treasure this is."

Oddly, that's the word many who know her use to describe Kit. She's a treasure.

PORTRAIT MODELS AT THE CLUB



Rich Watrous is one of the many models who sit for students in Katby Weber's Tuesday Portrait Drawing class.

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TYNIETOY AUTHORITY SUSAN GRIMSHAW SPEAKS TO CLUB MEMBERS ABOUT HER PASSION FOR CLUB'S LEGACY

Noted authority on Tynietoy and a Tynietoy collector of some note Susan Grimshaw spoke at two events at the Club on September 29. At a box lunch she spoke before a group of 30 women about the history of Tynietoy which was started in 1925 by Club members Marion I. Perkins and Amey Vernon. This was a time when it was rare for women to start up businesses, much less manufacturing businesses. Tynietoy was famous world-wide for their historically accurate furniture miniatures and dollhouses created, displayed and sold from the Club until 1930, when manufacturing was moved elsewhere.



Susan Grimshaw during her presentation.

The daytime discussion and slide presentation focused on the furniture which Tynietoy sold to FAO Schwartz, Marshall Fields and other noted stores, as well as custom work for private clients. The mission of founders Perkins and Vernon was to manufacture toys, and to offer a livelihood for people, especially veterans. They farmed out the work, with one person becoming a specialist in turnings for small table and chair legs, another would be an expert painter, others expert designers, and blind people to sand the furniture. A story has it that once a house was finished, it would be loaded onto a wheelchair and rolled down to the docks to ship to stores.

The evening presentation by Grimshaw focused on the design of the houses themselves and the gardens. She was just as expert in this field as she was about the furnishings.

Design sources for Tynietoy homes included New England and Colonial Revival, RISD, Mt. Vernon, Betsy Ross and Independence Hall, Spanish Colonial Revival and catalogues and magazine ads. Vernon and Perkins as well as their successors were very resourceful.

TYNIETOY MANSION FUND HAS SUPPORT OF MEMBERS WITH DONATIONS OF MONEY, FURNITURE



President Margie Edwards accepts a Tynietoy cradle from Anne Ott.

Since the purchase of the Tynietoy Mansion, the Tynietoy Heritage Committee has received \$9,910 in monetary donations in addition to furniture valued at \$355, according to Margaret Lederer and Marilyn Shealey, committee co-chairs.

The committee has spent \$7,076 on furnishings for the mansion, and has committed another \$435 for a room donated by Ann Holmes. That leaves roughly \$2400 in the account.

The committee has had a busy summer and fall. They acquired a Tynietoy garden and walkway to complement the Mansion. These pieces rarely become available, according to Margaret and Marilyn, "so we feel very fortunate to have been given the ability to acquire them along with several rooms of furniture." They added, "All this has been possible due to the enthusiasm and contributions from Club members."

In addition the committee has completed a study for finding a safe and appropriate depository for Tynietoy papers and furniture templates. These are now residing at the RISD library in their special collections, thanks in large measure to Alice Beckwith, the Club's librarian/historian, who was instrumental in making these arrangements. The artifacts and papers will be available to Club members as well as others who wish to research Tynietoy history under the supervision of RISD librarians.

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The Tynietoy Heritage Committee is looking into procuring a plexiglass surround or case to enclose and protect the Mansion and its garden. Members hope to continue to acquire Tynietoy furniture for the rooms still unfinished. They will also be exploring other opportunities for community outreach so that they can continue to inspire women entrepreneurs and honor the Club's heritage of handicrafts.



President Margie Edwards accepts a Tynietoy rug from Merry Howe.

REVISED PROVISIONS PRO-RATE DUES FOR NEW MEMBERS JOINING CLUB MID-YEAR

Currently active members joining the Club between June and October pay the full \$275 for dues. New rules provide that for those who are admitted to the Club in time to be eligible to take fall session classes, their dues will remain at \$275.

However, for those new members who are admitted to the Club in time to be eligible to take winter session classes the dues have been adjusted to \$200. And for those who are admitted to the Club in time to be eligible to take spring session classes, the dues for the first year are \$125.

New members accepted after a session has begun will not be able to take classes until the following session.

If you're proposing a new member for the Club and have questions about fee structure of how to propose a member, consult membership committee co-chairs Jozy Mainelli and Anne Considine, who spearheaded this effort to make dues more equitable for new members.

IN MEMORIAM

Martha Lord, member since 2001, from Greenwich, CT passed away last month. Devoted to Decorative Painting, she attended Monday and Tuesday classes each week at the Handicraft Club, commuting from CT until her 90th year.

Esther Elise Mauran, member since 1988, also passed away last month. Her most longstanding involvement was with RISD from whom she received an honorary degree.

Former member Jody Blish also passed away recently. Jody died at her home in Rumford. She taught mathematics at Lincoln School for most of her life. She was a Life Master in US contract bridge tournament play, and accomplished in many other areas as well.

The Club is saddened to lose these three friends.

HALLOWEEN AT THE CLUB



Jay Connelly and Betsy Boyer show off their festive attire in their Rug Hooking class.

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MONEY MATTERS

...an occasional column written by a former finance chairman in response to member questions.

This first column deals with basic organization of the Club. Future columns will answer questions about investments, financial reporting and the budget process. Your questions will be answered if you email them to the address at the end of the column.

How if the Handicraft Club organized?

The Club is a not for profit corporation and qualifies for tax exempt status under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. We do not pay federal or state income taxes or city property taxes (so far). Take note: This means that any donations you make to the Club over and above your dues and class fees can be listed as a charitable contribution on your income taxes.

Who's the boss?

Your Club is governed by a board of directors, which is called, according to our By-Laws, The Executive Board. The Executive Board is composed of seven officers and 12 chairs of standing committees. Only one chair, the Finance Committee Chair, is an elected officer. She also serves as the Treasurer. The seven officers are elected at the annual meeting in May and usually serve for two years although they have one-year terms. No one can serve more than four years in the same office. The other chairs are persuaded into service and can serve forever. The Executive Board is elected at the annual meeting. An observation: usually less than 10 percent of members show up for annual meetings to make this all official.

Who controls the money?

For many years the Finance Committee Chair oversaw all financial activities of the Club including financial operations, investments, insurance and payroll. In 2012 the By-Laws were amended to separate the financial operations from the investments. The Finance Committee and the Investment Committee have three common members: Treasurer, Asst. Treasurer and Investment Committee Chair. Each committee also has one other member who is proposed by the Nominating Committee and elected at the annual meeting to serve a two-year term. The President also serves on the Finance Committee, but not the Investment Committee.

How much money do we have?

For an organization of our size, we are very well off financially. As of September 30, 2014, the market value of the two investment funds totaled \$1,391,879. The Club also maintains a checking account and a savings account at Bank of America to facilitate the payment of monthly bills and the collection of dues and fees. When funds grow in these accounts and are idling away without making any money, they are transferred to an investment account.

The By-Laws state that the Club shall maintain a General Fund and an Endowment Fund. What is the difference in the two funds?

The General Fund is intended to support operations and is theoretically available to cover unforeseen financial emergencies. The Endowment Fund is meant to support capital expenses, that is, one-time expenses to maintain the physical assets of the Club.

How are the investments managed?

Historically, the investments were managed by Bank of America (mostly its predecessors). By 2002, it was determined that the Club's accounts were too small to receive any attention from the now giant bank. A thorough search resulted in transfer of the accounts to Newman, Dignan & Sheerar, a small, local investment company. As of June 30, 2014, the Endowment Fund had gained 10.3% and the General Fun had gained 8.2% over the last five years under their management. The Club pays a .9% management fee, which is standard for this size account.

Why is the investment return less on the General Fund?

Since the objective of the General Fund is to be available at short notice, the funds are invested more conservatively with 15% held in cash, 35% in fixed income vehicles and just 50% in equities. The target mix in the Endowment Fund is 10% cash, 30% fixed income and 60% in equities.

Check future newsletters for further details on the financial management of the Club. Any specific questions can be emailed to patricialey@msn.com.