

The Cogswell Family Papers: In 250 Years of One Family's Records, The History of a Town - 2006 - Summer 2008



In January of 2006, the Gunn Memorial Library & Museum acquired the "Cogswell Family Papers," a large volume of family papers -- totaling hundreds of documents, correspondence, deeds, account books, as well as newspapers, maps, publications and photos filling 26 cartons of various sizes -- from the Cogswell Family of New Preston, Connecticut. Until recently, this private collection had been stored in the attic of

the Cogswell Tavern (now a residence) in New Preston. The collection was donated to the Gunn Memorial Library & Museum by descendents and current owners of the homestead.

Beginning more than 200 years ago, the Cogswell Family, from one generation to another, created and kept records, mementos, and evidence of everyday life from the time of their settlement of New Preston in 1746 through the present day, preserving information about their history, their community and its people. The collection is remarkable for its size, age and condition, and will be invaluable in providing helpful insights about the town's history.

The Cogswell Family had a hand in practically every important aspect of community life -- commerce, industry, law, education. They were active citizens, business owners, schoolmasters, sheriffs, church deacons, judges, lawyers and tavern keepers. It was at "Squire Cogswell's" that General George Washington recorded a stop at the Tavern for breakfast, in his diary on May 25, 1781.

To reinforce its mission to collect, preserve, interpret and make available records that would otherwise be lost, the museum accepted the challenge and the responsibility to preserve and protect this fragile collection in a way that is consistent with professional archival practice. As we continue to sort and organize these historical papers, the museum will be showcasing representative examples that offer insight into the history of New Preston and our town of Washington over the last 250 years.

History Bites Lecture: The Museum hosted a lecture and slide show by Alison Gilchrist, "Their Hands in Every Thing: The Cogswells of New Preston," as part of the History Bites lecture series, on Thursday April 12th. Audience members were invited to bring their lunch, and refreshments were served. Alison's lecture coincided with the Gunn Museum's exhibit showcasing the newly discovered "Cogswell Family Papers," a treasure-trove of documents from the Cogswell Family of New Preston.