

Notes From the Firehouse

Home of the Annisquam Historical Society



May 2022

The Annisquam Exchange

Rita Littlewood Teele

The ladies who launch:
getting The Exchange
shipshape for the 2022
opening!

Left to Right:

Joline Hentschel

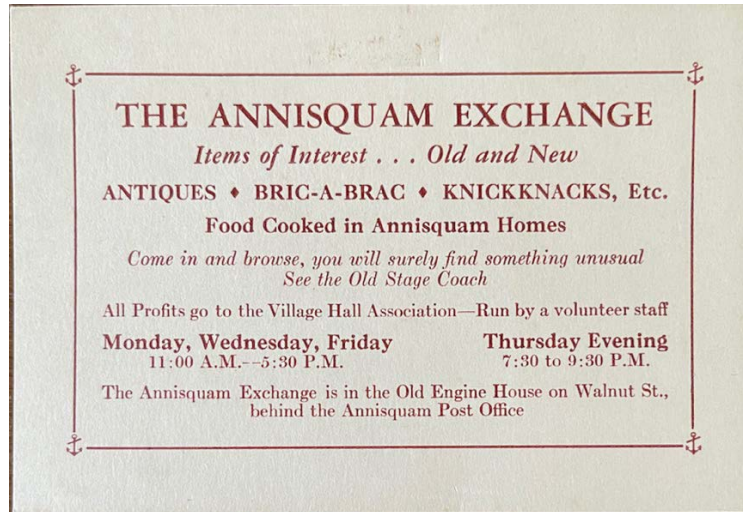
Jackie Parker

Connie Mason

Linette French



The Annisquam Exchange has occupied the ground floor of the Leonard Schoolhouse for as many summers as most can remember. It may be a surprise to learn that the earliest version of The Exchange was housed in the “Old Engine House”, on Walnut Street, now home of the Annisquam Historical Society. The card below was undated.



In the crumpled newspaper clipping from 1985, shown below, three ladies, “The Firehouse Gang”, Bertha Heberle, Gertrude Griffin, and Ida Andrews were identified as having started The Exchange “at least 40 years ago.” (Later records indicate that 1945 was a premature birthdate.)



Usually, the first names of husbands identified married ladies of that era. The article above was unusual in providing the women's first names.

Bertha Hay Heberle, married to Charles Heberle Jr. who ran the Building Center in Gloucester, lived at 53 Leonard Street (often referred to as the "Pink House").

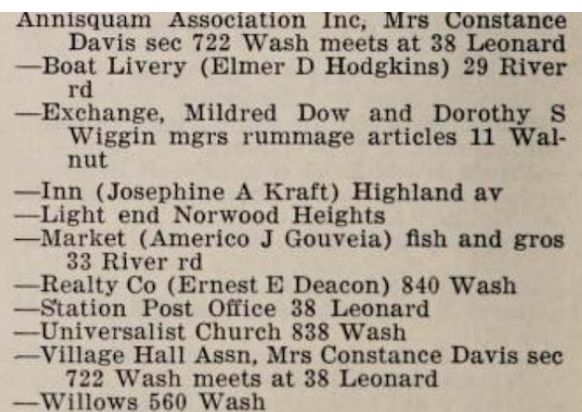
Ida Pulcifer Andrews, married to dentist Earle Andrews, was living in the Pulcifer house at 31 Leonard Street. Sarah Hackett, Ida's daughter, now lives there.

Gertrude Griffin, granddaughter of Orrin E. Griffin, stagecoach owner, lived at 56 River Road.

From newspaper reports of social functions in Annisquam during the mid-nineteen hundreds, it is apparent that all three ladies were very much involved in teas, dances, concerts, Sea Fair, and church functions—often with one another as co-hosts or organizers. Geraldine Herbert remembers her mother, Irene Parkhurst, as being at The Exchange with Mildred Dow and Dorothy Wiggin in the early days. She also remembers involvement of the men of the neighbourhood (including her father) helping to clear the Firehouse for the new venture, of painting the outside of the Firehouse, and of the floor of the Firehouse being a glossy gray color. (A picnic lunch was the reward for workers.) In years since, men in the community, with wire cutter, hammer, screwdriver, or paintbrush in hand, have contributed their efforts. Paraphrasing Abigail Adams, we hereby "remember the gentlemen" and their handiwork.

The best guess from multiple sources is that The Exchange began circa 1950 with the sale of "rummage articles" from the back of the Firehouse. In the Gloucester City Directory of 1953, "Mildred Dow and Dorothy S Wiggin" were listed as "mgrs rummage articles."

11 Walnut Street referred to the Firehouse, now 7 Walnut Street.



Annisquam Association Inc, Mrs Constance Davis sec 722 Wash meets at 38 Leonard
—Boat Livery (Elmer D Hodgkins) 29 River rd
—Exchange, Mildred Dow and Dorothy S Wiggin mgrs rummage articles 11 Walnut
—Inn (Josephine A Kraft) Highland av
—Light end Norwood Heights
—Market (Americo J Gouveia) fish and gros 33 River rd
—Realty Co (Ernest E Deacon) 840 Wash
—Station Post Office 38 Leonard
—Universalist Church 838 Wash
—Village Hall Assn, Mrs Constance Davis sec 722 Wash meets at 38 Leonard
—Willows 560 Wash

The Gloucester Directory was published on a two-year cycle and information often lagged by a year. Luckily, an article published in the *Gloucester Daily Times* in 1955, included below, seems definitive: The Exchange moved from the Firehouse (then called Engine House) to the Leonard School in 1954.



The Leonard Schoolhouse had been vacated by teacher and students years before. However, the City of Gloucester took some time in deciding the fate of the Schoolhouse as well as that of the Firehouse. In August of 1956, a two-page deed that documented the sale of the land and the buildings thereon to Annisquam Association Inc. "for one dollar paid" was signed and registered. (In the meantime, the citizens of Annisquam had adopted and cared for the buildings and their contents.) It is likely that discrepancies in "birthdates" for The Exchange relate to poor documentation of its early existence in the Firehouse, and its relocation to the vacated Leonard School.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS

That the CITY OF GLOUCESTER, a municipal corporation duly established by law and located in Essex County, Massachusetts, for one dollar paid, grants to ANNISQUAM ASSOCIATION, INC., a duly organized Massachusetts non-profit corporation with its usual place of business in said Gloucester, without covenants, a certain parcel of land with the buildings thereon, situated on the Northwesterly side of Leonard Street in said Gloucester, bounded and described as follows:-

SOUTHEASTERLY by Leonard Street, eighty and eighty hundredths (80.80) feet; SOUTHWESTERLY by land now or formerly of Smith, Jr. et ux, ninety-eight and forty hundredths (98.40) feet; NORTHWESTERLY by Walnut Street, ninety-one (91) feet, and NORTHEASTERLY by land now or formerly of the grantee, one hundred thirty-three (133) feet; be all measurements more or less.

This conveyance is made with the following reservations:-

1. That said Annisquam Association, Inc. reconvey the said premises to the City of Gloucester, should said City in the future require the property or any part thereof for street widening or for any other public purpose;
2. That should the Annisquam Association, Inc. cease to exist or not carry on the civic work for which it is organized, title to the granted premises shall thereupon become reverted in the City of Gloucester.
3. That said City of Gloucester may use without charge, one of the buildings on the granted premises, for a polling place in the event that the grantor so desires.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the City of Gloucester hereto signs its corporate name and affixes its corporate seal, by the hand of Richard W. Mayo, its city manager, this *Twentieth* day of August, 1956, the said Richard W. Mayo being duly authorized by vote of the Municipal Council of the City of Gloucester, dated August 2, 1956.

CITY OF GLOUCESTER
BY *Richard W. Mayo*
City Manager

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Essex, ss *Aug 21* 1956

Then personally appeared before me, Richard W. Mayo, the City Manager of the City of Gloucester, and he acknowledged the foregoing instrument to be the free act and deed of the City of Gloucester.

Allen D. [Signature]
Notary Public
My Commission Expires: *12/31/1962*

Essex ss. Recorded Aug. 23, 1956. 25 m. past 8 A. M. #9

The Exchange was, and still is open only in the summer months, although special, single day sales may be held during autumn and spring. The Furniture Sale was first held in 2001. Volunteers are drawn from year-long residents and “summer folk”. Connie Mason remembers Sarah Banks, Barbara Russ, Rue French Megrew, Anne Babson, and Peg Abele as being involved in 1986, along with Dot Wiggin and Gert Griffin, two of the founding members. Linette French, who had a background in retail sales joined the group about that time. Rue, who had married Winsor Gale after both were widowed, lived down the street from the Exchange. On days that she was volunteering at the Exchange, she rang the Leonard School bell 5 minutes before closing time to signal Winsor to turn on the heat under the soup. The bell was also rung each time there was a fantastic sale. Mondays are generally the biggest sale days. When The Exchange had to be closed during filming for the movie “The Love Letter”, the lost revenue was based on Monday receipts....



In the early days of The Exchange, coffee and donuts were served to customers. Later, the menu expanded to home-cooked items that could be bought and taken home. Pies from the Exchange were famous, especially those made by Proxie Smith (Martha Bentley’s mother). They were the source of evening dessert for many families during summer. I remember my mother-in-law, K.P. Teele, sending me to The Exchange to collect a pie (I think it was blueberry)—in the late 1960s or early 1970s. Sadly, public health rules have “squashed” the production of pies and other home-cooked food.

Edith Atwater, photographed for an undated newspaper article, displayed her blueberry pie.

Over the years, “rummage articles” have been replaced by second hand objects that are required to be in good condition. In the early fifties, residents of the village

were encouraged to bring articles such as “home-braided rugs, or delicate and dainty aprons, and exquisite bags” for sale on commission. Patsy Whitlock continued that tradition with her handmade potholders. There are now few handmade items offered for sale. As Annisquam attics have been emptied of treasures, more articles have been placed on consignment. Although there are fewer children’s toys and books for sale nowadays, the candy table remains in place, close to the front door. Old fashioned sweets from Salem were stocked in the early days; Tootsie Rolls and lollipops remain favorite purchases. Bridge jumpers often need a sweet snack after their exertions; payment with wet dollar bills follows high tides. A chocolate lollipop is said to be a favorite treat of the artist who lives at Union Court, and it is rumored that a certain Boston University hockey coach has been running a tab at the candy table.

The children had an added treat in 2007, a coloring contest:



The “grand prize” was \$5....and everyone who entered won that prize.

Kathie Groves, who had been a volunteer at The Exchange, was hired as manager in 2002. She came from an administrative background and learned retail business from her mother who ran a gift shop.



Eliza Taft Bentley shopped at the Annisquam Exchange while she was visiting Cape Ann from Westwood. Volunteer Katherine Groves rings up her purchases.

A photograph from the *Cape Ann Summer Sun* in 1998, above, shows the early arrangement of table and chair next to the stove, while Eliza Bentley pays Kathie Groves for her purchases at The Exchange.

Another photograph, below, undated, includes the children's toy corner, and the glass-topped counters. These were spotted by Kathie when a Main Street store closed. Acquired at a bargain price, they were installed in The Exchange to better display jewelry and small items. The pipe from the stove (top left of image) that had been present since the days of the schoolhouse, was later removed because of rainwater dripping into the building from leakage around the chimney. The chimney was also removed, and the roof repaired.



Below is a familiar sight: the shelf of colored glass vases, bottles and pitchers, glowing from the sun. The wire netting inside the windows is no longer in place. It had been installed when balls and other flying objects were too often the cause of broken windows when school was in session.



Folly Cove designed fabrics were featured in a special sale in The Exchange in 2009. Lee Natti, in red, a Folly Cove Designer, visited the Exchange that summer.

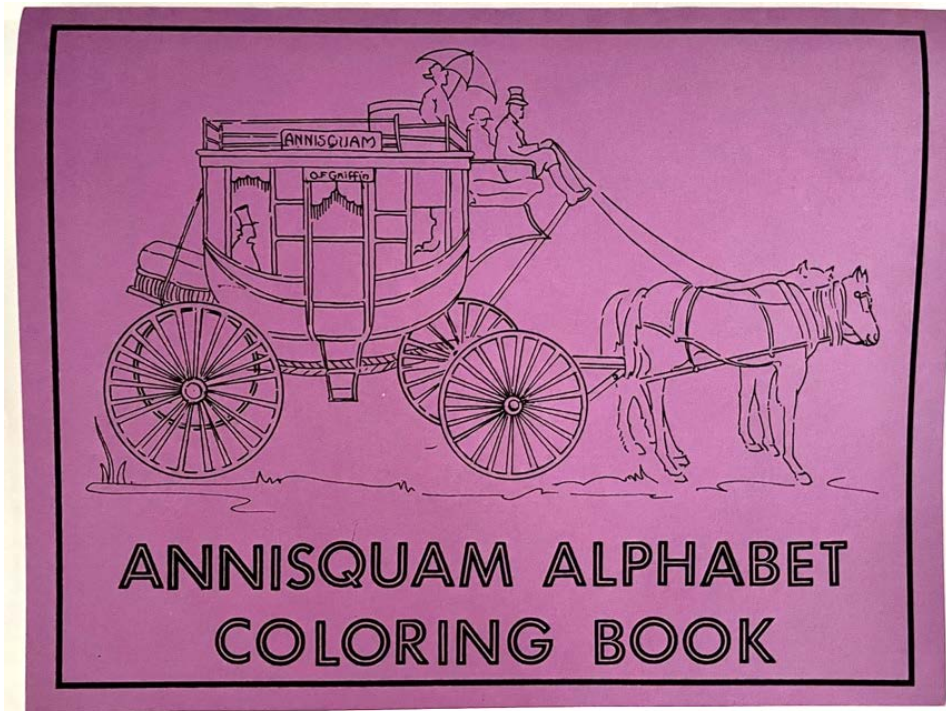


Two notable projects sponsored by The Exchange included publication of a photographic calendar in 2010 and, in a major collaborative effort, a limited edition of tiled tables. Gayle Murray made the tables, Elinor Teele supplied a photograph of the lighthouse, and students from the North Shore Recovery High School printed the photographic image on tiles.

The Exchange operates as an informal news bureau. Jackie Hardy, who represented Ward 4 until her early death in 2014, had visited The Exchange one Saturday and realized that many of her constituents were shopping there. She had an informal office in The Exchange for many Saturdays thereafter. The Covid pandemic not only limited The Exchange in terms of income, which is dispersed amongst various charities, but affected its volunteer staff. In 2020, members missed their social connections to fellow volunteers, neighbors, and customers. With Sandra Williams who has continued as manager, The Exchange will open this June with the expectation that the return of familiar Annisquam summer events will follow. It is fitting that an old, but now new, item will be sold at The Exchange:

Annisquam Alphabet Coloring Book, by Frances Keyes Vandermark.

This book of poems and drawings was first published in 1973. It has been reprinted in time for Gloucester's 400th Birthday in 2023.



The following is likely to be an incomplete list of those volunteers at The Exchange who have served customers, and the community. For those whose names are not included please send your name or the name of friend or relative to: info@annisquamhistoricalsociety.org before July 1st, 2022.

Alphabetical list of volunteers

Cindy Bingham

Anthea Brigham

Cynthia Borghesani

Vicki Bourneuf

Isabelle Brown

Suzanne Brown

Anthea Brigham

Lenore Churchill

Nancy Davis

Michalene Flaherty

Linette French

Amy Gault

Kathie Groves
Louise Gustafson
Sue Harris
Joline Hentschel
Betsey Horovitz
Jill Josephson
Jackie Littlefield
Connie Mason

Jennifer McCarthy
Katherine McMillan
Charlotte Michon
Gayle Murray
Sarrin Owens
Jackie Parker
Mary Pope
Faith Ronan

Doris Rust
Carol Stearns
Ellen Stone
Rita Teele
Patsy Whitlock
Sarah Wilkins