



FORBES library

NORTHAMPTON'S PUBLIC LIBRARY

Winter 2013-14

NEWSLETTER

Volume 5, Issue 2



photo by Jeep Wheat

NORTHAMPTON HISTORY THROUGH THE LENS OF FICTION

Susan Stinson, writer in residence at Forbes Library since 2010, recently published her fourth novel, *Spider in a Tree*. Set in Northampton in the eighteenth century, it depicts the famous preacher Jonathan Edwards, his family and his world. Ms. Stinson worked on the book for a decade, devoting much of that time to researching the life of the theologian, local history and Colonial life.

A starred review in *Booklist* heralded her “mesmerizing narrative gifts,” while *Publishers Weekly* praised the book for its “beautifully evoked sense of lives lived under the eye, not only of prying neighbors, but of God, with all the terror and possibility that entailed.”

The recipient of the 2011 Outstanding Mid-Career Novelist Prize from the Lambda Foundation, Ms. Stinson also oversees the library’s Local History/Local Novelists reading and lecture series. We spoke with her recently about her book and her role at the library.

How did you come to this story?

I live across Route 9 from the Bridge Street cemetery, where many of the people who became characters in the book are buried, including some in the family of Jonathan Edwards. I was spending a lot of time walking and writing there – it’s so quiet and beautiful – and became interested in their stories.

see *STINSON Q&A*, page 2

GIVING THE LIBRARY A MUCH NEEDED LIFT

What happens when we define a need? We swing into action to find a solution. That’s what happened when the staff and trustees of the library looked at the current lift and found it wanting. Sometimes it worked. Sometimes it broke down entirely and needed costly parts and repair. It limped along a little too long. It was time to find an alternative.

And so the elevator project, called “Forbes for All,” began, with plans drawn up and a budget determined. Then all that was needed was the funding. That’s when a team was formed.

Mike and Judy Ryan co-chaired a committee that gathered a team of volunteers in the long process of fundraising. In June, a seminar was held to coach many of the team members in the art of raising funds. The volunteers sent letters and made phone calls and personal visits to ask potential donors for help.

The word went out in other ways too. Public service announcements appeared on the public access station and on the library website. The media paid notice, in print and on the radio. The word was getting out there that an elevator was sorely needed to provide access for all.

Fortunately, the response from patrons and donors has been tremendous. At the time of this writing, the library volunteers have secured pledges that are just \$25,000 shy of the goal to start the construction project.



see *MUCH NEEDED LIFT*, page 2

SUSAN STINSON Q&A



photo by Tree Launch

You've been working on this book for a decade. Tell us about the research on the characters and place.

You know, I've been working on the book for at least ten years, and my dear ones were teasing me this weekend that it had been even longer than that. I did a lot of research of many kinds. I spoke with the wonderful Elise Bernier-Feeley, the Special Collections librarian at Forbes, who is so passionate and knowledgeable about Jonathan Edwards. She told me stories about the Edwards family, and showed me some of the treasures that Forbes has: the page from JE's account book, a letter, the slice of the Edwards Elm. Wonderful old maps. And books, so many wonderful, evocative books. I went to the Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale. Most of JE's papers are there, and the scholars there have been enormously welcoming and helpful. I read everything I could find about material culture – the things you could touch, taste and smell – in the eighteenth century. I read JE's sermons, treatises, notebooks and letters.

Finally, I spent a lot of time outside here in the Connecticut River Valley, paying attention to all that I saw, smelled, heard, and tasted. That's one of the ways insects entered the world of the book. I stopped whatever else I was doing when one showed up, and tried to write down everything it did before it left. Since I thought that in the eighteenth century people surely would have been visited by insects, too, they came to seem like mes-

sengers from that other century. Jonathan Edwards was a naturalist as well as a preacher.

So nature and the local environment necessarily played a large role in your novel?

Yes, JE read the landscape as he read Scripture, trying to recognize the hand of God in all he saw. He's got a wonderful notebook called "Images of Divine Things" that reflects that. Trying to imagine life in the eighteenth century not only made me more aware of insects, it made me more aware of the Connecticut River and its tributaries. The river was the center of so much in that time.

You've been a writer in residence at Forbes for three years. During that time you've also curated the library's Local History/Local Novelists lecture series. How is the series important to you personally and for Northampton generally?

The book launch for *Spider in a Tree* was the first event of the 2013/14 Local History/Local Novelists series, which is at 7 p.m. on (mostly) the first Wednesday of the month, October to May. (The launch was amazing, by the way. One hundred and fifty people came! A librarian counted heads.) The valley

is so rich in writers, it's been just an enormous pleasure getting to put novelists, short story writers, poets and other artists in conversation with each other, and with history.

I think Northampton is a fantastic place to have experiences of exploring the nature and power of stories, and that people here are up for being startled and grappling with the unexpected. I also think that it makes the gifts of current writers, scholars and thinkers more evident to the community when we hear their thoughts and work in the context of beloved or interesting writing, people or events of the past.

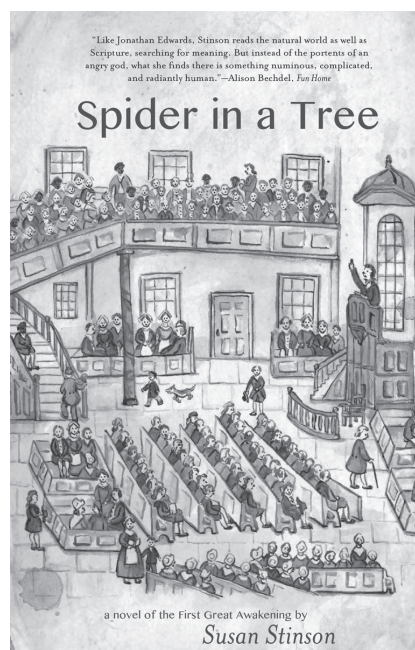
from MUCH NEEDED LIFT, page 1

The superhero figure that graces the library's banner tracks the progress of the fund drive. Slowly, he has ascended so that success is in sight. Work can begin very soon after we reach our goal.

The sketches at the library entrance help patrons envision how the elevator will look in its place next to the imposing stone steps. The new elevator will make library services available to those who look at those granite steps and have to turn away. The disabled or injured, the elderly, parents with strollers, delivery people and staff emptying the book drops are all eagerly awaiting the new addition.

What a team! The team members are not only those volunteers who are trying to raise the money for the project, but also the people in the community and beyond who have contributed so generously. You are part of that team, too. We're so close. Let's take it over the finish line. It's time to have access for all!

Please help us reach our goal with a gift to the elevator fund. You can make a donation online at the Forbes website or mail a check, payable to Forbes Library, to the library at 20 West Street, Northampton, MA 01060.



LOCAL HISTORY LOCAL NOVELISTS

2013 READING & LECTURE SERIES

First Wednesday of the month, except where noted
7 p.m., Coolidge Museum at Forbes Library

December 4, 2013

Hampshire County Memories: Historic Local Photographs

Join Stan Sherer, Faith Kaufmann and Dylan Gaffney for an illustrated presentation of historic and contemporary photographs that document important, and sometimes overlooked, aspects of Hampshire County.



January 8, 2014
(2nd Wednesday)

Journalists as Fiction Writers

Andrew Adamek, Fred Contrada,
Bob Flaherty, James Heflin,
Diane Lederman, and Mark Roessler

February 5, 2014

Quabbin

J.R. Greene, author,
The Creation of Quabbin Reservoir:
The Death of the Swift River Valley

Maryanne O'Hara, novelist, *Cascade*

Gail Thomas, poet, *No Simple Wilderness:*
An Elegy for Swift River Valley

NEW AMERICANS PANEL

On November 13, the Northampton Human Rights Commission, in conjunction with All Hamptons Read, hosted a panel at the library to discuss the experiences of refugees and immigrants.



Caseworkers, who are also refugees, from the New Americans Program of Jewish Family Services of Western Massachusetts (JFS) and immigrants associated with the Center for New Americans (CNA) in Northampton addressed their reasons for migration and the process of resettlement in the area.

Robert Marmor, JFS president, provided background on the difficult process of resettlement, ranging from the concrete needs of housing, education and employment to the emotional needs of individuals who arrive in a foreign land with few resources. JFS and CNA help resettle refugees in the area and both rely heavily on volunteers to assist with the process.

In front of a packed audience, the panelists' powerful personal accounts brought to life the stories of the young war refugees in the book *Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference*, by Warren St. John. It was the culminating event of the two-month-long All Hamptons Read, a four-town-wide community reading of the book. The program brought together the public libraries in Easthampton, Northampton, Southampton and Westhampton. All Hamptons Read was made possible by generous contributions from Florence Savings Bank, East-

hampton Savings Bank and the Friends group of each library.

"The panelists' frankness about the challenges that they faced on arriving in the U.S., knowing very little English and having left everything behind, was touching," said Laurie Millman, CNA marketing and development coordinator. "The fact that they all found support and have integrated successfully into their new community is inspiring."

Ms. Millman invites people who would like to volunteer, either tutoring newcomers in English or coaching citizenship applicants, to contact CNA at 413-587-0084 or www.cnam.org.

E-BOOKS SURGE IN POPULARITY AT FORBES

The library now has more than 20,000 digital items from which to choose. This is a 300% increase from the prior year, and the library is experiencing a corresponding jump in circulation. "There is high demand by our patrons for digital content, and we will continue to focus resources on meeting this demand," said Library Director Janet Moulding. By the end of 2013 Forbes will be part of a statewide pilot program to supply easy access to many additional e-book titles.



Thursday, December 12
is the day when you and your neighbors
across Western Massachusetts
come together to support
your favorite causes.

Please consider making a gift
to Forbes Library.

Remember 12-12-13
We hope to hear from you!

HOSMER GALLERY

DECEMBER 2013

Marie Welch
Miniature Paintings

Karen Leveille
Watercolor Paintings

Karen Iglehart
Oil Paintings

JANUARY 2014

Tracey Eller
Collaborative Photo Portraits

Joshua Dietz
Surrealistic Paintings

Rachel Hankinson,
Indian Miniature Fusion Paintings

FEBRUARY 2014

Loran Diehl Saito
Fiber Art Stories

Tekla McNerney
3D Artists' Books

Carolyn Bessette
Fiber Arts

HIGH SPIRITS AT WINE TASTING GALA

On a beautiful fall evening at the end of September, the Friends of Forbes hosted its third gala wine tasting in the library. Live jazz from the mezzanine, colorful bouquets of zinnias and marigolds and a remarkable variety of wines, beers, and ciders provided by Liquors 44 greeted more than 150 guests.

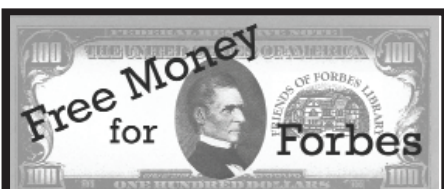
In addition to 13 different beverage vendors dispensing drinks and information in the reading and reference rooms and around the circulation desk, the library was also abuzz with enthusiasm for a scrumptious variety of hors d'oeuvres and snacks, much of it donated by area restaurants and food stores.



The evening also included a raffle with several exciting prizes, ranging from golf rounds to concert tickets donated by local friends and organizations. All proceeds from the event go to benefit Forbes Library.



The Friends are extremely grateful to everyone who contributed to the evening of great fun: the volunteers; the musicians; Sandy Duclos, who designed our promotional material; and the donors of glassware, food and raffle prizes. We hope you all come again next year!



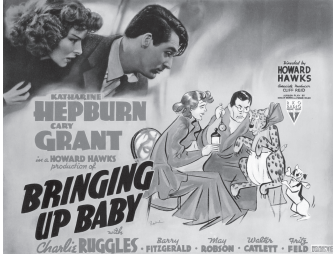
The Florence Savings Bank is continuing its generous Customers' Choice Community Grants Program. This year the bank will donate a total of \$75,000 to local non-profit organizations.

The Friends of Forbes hope that those of you who voted for us last year (and earned the library \$3,500!) will vote for us again, and that those of you who didn't vote will choose us this year.

You must be a FSB customer to vote. Voting is easier than ever. Simply go to the Florence Savings Bank website and click on *Vote Now Customers' Choice* to fill out the short form. Of course you may pick up a ballot at the library or fill a ballot out at the bank.

**However you choose to do it, please
vote for your favorite library,
Forbes!**

FORBES VIDEO: CLASSIC COMEDIES LIGHT UP WINTER NIGHTS



Bringing Up Baby (1938) Directed by Howard Hawks. Starring Katharine Hepburn and Cary

Grant. A madcap comedy in which a befuddled paleontologist meets a self-assured heiress with an elusive pet leopard.

City Lights (1931) Directed by Charlie Chaplin. Starring Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin's legendary tramp befriends a forlorn millionaire and falls in love with a beautiful blind flower girl.

Duck Soup (1933) Directed by Leo McCarey. Starring the Marx Brothers. Groucho's Rufus T. Firefly is named president of Freedonia. Neighbor Sylvania hires Harpo and Chico as spies, leading to countless classic Marx Bros. sequences.

His Girl Friday (1940) Directed by Howard Hawks. Starring Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell. A frenetic madcap comedy in which a newspaper publisher (Grant) tries to convince his reporter ex-wife (Russell) to write "one more story" in order to keep her from getting remarried.

Kind Hearts and Coronets (1949) Directed by Robert Hamer. Starring Alec Guinness and Valerie Hobson. A comic tour de force by Guinness as he plays a distant relative of the deceased Duke of D'Ascoyne and all eight of the relatives he must murder in order to inherit the title.

The Philadelphia Story (1940) Directed by George Cukor. Starring Katharine Hepburn, James Stewart and Cary Grant. A wealthy Philadelphia socialite (Hepburn) has her wedding plans complicated by the arrival of her ex-husband (Grant) and a tabloid journalist (Stewart) in this classic screwball remarriage comedy.

The Thin Man (1934) Directed by W.S. Van Dyke. Starring William Powell and Myrna Loy. A comedy-mystery about a hard-drinking retired private detective and his wise-cracking wealthy heiress wife who are attempting to settle down when the disappearance of an old friend draws them back into the business of solving crimes.

Sullivan's Travels (1941) Directed by Preston Sturges. Starring Joel McCrea and Veronica Lake. Sturges' classic satire about a spoiled film director of escapist movies who goes on the road disguised as a hobo and encounters the stark realities of true poverty.



LIBRARY BRIEFS



A DAY AT THE WADSWORTH Just down I-91 from Northampton is a gem of an art museum waiting to be discovered. Hartford's Wadsworth is the oldest public art museum in the United States. Its collections of nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, including Greek and Roman antiquities, world-renowned Baroque and Surrealist paintings, an unsurpassed collection of Hudson River School landscapes and Impressionist paintings.

You can spend a delightful day viewing the marvelous art, eating in the terrific cafe, browsing the wonderful gift shop and, best of all, your admission is free! Thanks to the museum passes available for checkout at the

circulation desk, you and your family (two adults and two children, through age 17) can visit the museum free of charge. Check out the website at www.thewadsworth.org for exhibits and special programs and to verify the museum's hours, then grab a pass and head off for a day of art and fun. Forbes has a long list of museum passes for loan. Read the borrowing guidelines at www.forbeslibrary.org/services/passes.shtml.

THE ETERNAL QUESTION: WHAT TO READ NEXT? Don't know what to read next? The reference department is now offering personalized reading lists! Just fill out a quick questionnaire on our website and tell us about books you've liked or disliked in the past. Once we know your preferences, we will send you a list of read-alikes complete with descriptions and links to the catalog. This is a fun way to learn about new books and rediscover old classics. Check out the Good Reads section of our website to request your own personalized reading list or browse our collection of booklists. Whether you like action, fantasy or memoirs, there's bound to be a list there for you.

"I appreciate the reader's advisory service because I'm always on the hunt for good books, and who better to ask than an experienced

librarian?" says library patron Danielle E. Brown. "I was incredibly pleased with my results. I have yet to be disappointed."

HELP WITH JOB HUNTING If you're not sure how best to highlight your skills and match them to a specific job or career, the library offers free assistance. One-on-one help with resumes and cover letters from a career counselor is available for up to 15 minutes on Tuesday afternoons from 3:15 to 4:30 p.m. Email forbesresumeassistance@gmail.com to make an appointment. Drop-ins are also welcome as space allows.

FOOD FOR FINES Forbes Library will once again offer its Food for Fines program, from Jan. 4 through Jan. 15. All donations benefit the Northampton Survival Center. During this time you may donate nonperishable food items at the library. The library will forgive fines up to \$2 per item brought in during the program period. This does not apply to replacement fees or billed items. High-demand food items are nondairy milk, cereal, crackers, canned fruit, peanut butter, tuna fish, canned soup, macaroni and cheese, pasta and sauce, beans and rice. Please be courteous and do not bring items with expired dates or that are dented or in poor condition.

Friends of Forbes Library

BOARD WELCOMES TWO NEW FACES

There are two new faces on Friends of Forbes Library board. Lyn Heady and Peter Kobel joined the Friends board this fall.

Born and raised in Northampton, Ms. Heady attended Northampton High School and graduated from UMass, Amherst. She has had a lifelong relationship with the library. "Forbes Library has been a part of my life since I was a kid," she said. "The library is just a part of me."



Ms. Heady taught mathematics at Easthampton High School for 35 years. She required her Honors Algebra students to explore different career choices, and she always had them begin their research at Forbes Library. An enthusiastic gardener, she has worked on the Forbes Library Garden Tour for the past four years.

An accomplished quilter, Ms. Heady has been a member of the Hands Across the Valley Quilters Guild for 30 years. She also loves a good mystery novel. "I was always involved with the reading clubs during the summer," she said. "Mystery is my love. Patricia Cornwall got me hooked several years ago."



Mr. Kobel, a nonfiction author, is a relative newcomer to the Valley, having arrived from Brooklyn, N.Y., not quite two years ago. He said that he wrote a large part of his most recent book, *The Strange Case of the Mad Professor*, at Forbes. "It's such a wonderful place to write," he said, "and you don't even have to buy a coffee to work here."

"Joining the board and doing whatever I can to help Forbes is a kind of payback for being able to use this wonderful space and Forbes' resources," he said. "It's a remarkable library."

Mr. Kobel volunteers at the Hampshire County Jail, where he teaches a course in creative nonfiction writing. He also likes to play acoustic blues guitar and enjoys movies.

"I am so happy to welcome our newest board members," said Martha McCormick, president of the Friends of Forbes board. "It is most heartening to work with folks who hold the library in such high esteem that they are willing to give their time, talents and energy so freely. I very much look forward to working with them."

PAINTER DAVID BREWSTER

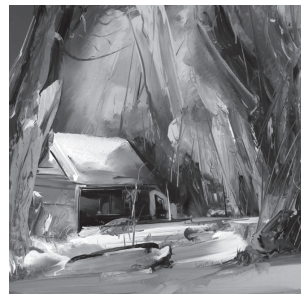
Artist Gives Library Three Landscapes

If you've been in the Reference Room or Arts & Music Department lately, you may have noticed some new, striking landscape paintings. They were recently given to Forbes Library by the contemporary artist David Brewster. Originally from Baltimore, Mr. Brewster lived for many years in Halifax, Vt., close to the Massachusetts state line before relocating his studio to Florence. He had a solo exhibition of his work in the Hosmer Gallery in 2006, which was very well received, so this was an exciting development for our permanent collection.



Behind Colrain Village, 2006

Mr. Brewster paints directly from life, working quickly to capture the essence of the scene and its emotional energy. His paintings are notable for their intensity and powerful use of color, which create an immediacy and sense of motion that capture the viewer's attention. He has received numerous commissions and awards, and his work is represented in a number of museum collections. He has taught painting throughout New England and the Mid-Atlantic and in France and Ireland.



Porcupine City, 2006

In the Reference Room is *Deerfield Power*, painted at a power station on the Deerfield River. The paintings in Arts & Music, *Behind Colrain Village* and *Porcupine City*, were both painted in Colrain. "I am very excited and proud to have my art permanently installed at Forbes," Mr. Brewster said when the paintings were hung.



Deerfield Power, 2010

A BIG WELCOME



Forbes welcomes our new co-assistants in the Children's Room, Lynn Gingras (right) and Nicole Daviau. Ms. Gingras is a Simmons West student who is working towards her MLS. She has already proven to be very tech savvy and has jumped into our busy routine with both feet! Ms. Daviau has a MFA in studio art. The mother of a 5-year-old, she is ready, willing and very able to take over the much-loved Toddler Time.