

Dover Historical Society

For Immediate Release

From Greystone Farm to the Connors Center



The Dover Historical Society will hold its Annual Meeting on Wednesday, March 27, 2019 at the Connors Center, 20 Glen Street, Dover, at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome to attend free of charge. There is plenty of parking and refreshments will be served. The featured speaker will be long time Dover resident Bonnie Akins who will recount the history and evolution of this storied 300 acre property from its early beginnings as a passageway from Boston and Dedham through Indian Territory to Sherborn in the mid-17th century to the present as a Retreat Center, the Connors Center, owned by Boston College.

Nineteenth century residents would have known the property as Greystone Farm. In the early 20th c., Benjamin Cheney acquired land in Dover and built Elm Bank (now the headquarters for Mass. Hort.) His daughter married Arthur Davis and they built the estate house up the hill where the meeting will take place. After their deaths and a series of rejections, the mansion was bought by the Catholic Church and became home to the Dominican Priory. Glenridge Estates subdivision was carved out of what remained of the original acreage which extended from Wight Street to the South Natick line and from Glen Street down to the Charles River. In 1981, Bonnie Akins and her husband moved in next door, and soon Bonnie began a passionate exploration of the history, evolution of buildings, Olmsted designed gardens, and the natural wonders of this wonderful resource in her own back yard.

Bonnie started visiting Dover as a babysitter in 1955 and moved here with her late husband, Carl, in 1970. First serving as house sitters on Strawberry Hill, they then moved to Hutton Road where she became close to neighbors across the field, Dover native and historical icon Emily (Chickering) Bertschy and her husband, school superintendent Harry Bertschy. Together the Bertschys resurrected the Sawin Museum and she served for decades as an influential leader of the Dover Historical Society. Bonnie was appointed to the Historical Commission in 1976, serving with Emily and the renowned Dover historian and author of *Dover Days Gone By*, Richard Hart Vara. Bonnie has been involved in Dover's political life from then on – some committees being Warrant, Capital Budget, Long Range Planning, and the Board of Assessors.

Since she moved to Greystone Road in 1981, she has been on a continuing search to discover all that she could about Greyhurst, a.k.a. Greystone Farm, which is now Boston College's Connors Center. Maps, correspondence, landscape plans, and family photographs are all part of the presentation she will give at the Historical Society's Annual Meeting on Wednesday, March 27. Boston College has generously offered the Parlor at Greystone Farm/Connors Center for the meeting. The Historical Society is grateful for their cooperation and support. Do plan to come learn about this part of Dover and also to see the extraordinary renovations Boston College has accomplished for this treasured property.