

2021

# Rehoboth Antiquarian Society Magazine

Carpenter Museum • Blanding Library • Arts in the Village



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# Letters to the Members

To the members and supporters of the Rehoboth Antiquarian Society, welcome to 2021! As always, I thank you for being with us during these "interesting times."

I would especially like to express my gratitude – and, I hope, yours – to those who have kept meeting new challenges to do the work of the Society.

As official rules and recommendations have changed, our staff at the Blanding Library and Carpenter Museum have adapted beautifully to jobs that were not what they signed up for. They have learned to use new technologies and been creative in providing services in new ways.

Museum exhibits and lectures went online, as did the library book club, the genealogy group,

and the popular Tuesday morning history discussion group. Library children's programming has used a combination of videos, take-home crafts, and outdoor activities. Some of these innovations will help us to be even better in the future.

At this writing, both buildings are closed to the public, but you can still visit our website, reserve and borrow books, and contact us with comments or suggestions by telephone, e-mail, or letter.

We look forward to better times ahead, and we look forward to being together.

*Rebecca Smith, President*

Thank you, members, for your continued support of Rehoboth Antiquarian Society and the Carpenter Museum. We all know this past year looked a lot different than we hoped. At our Museum, events were cancelled and public visitation was limited. However as history was being made staff and volunteers at the Carpenter Museum were still busy documenting and sharing Rehoboth stories.

We learned our speaker series does well online as well as in person, researchers continue to receive assistance through phone and email, and we saw how we all could adapt to a changing world. These are just a few of the silver linings to come out of the past year.

As a reminder of the ways you can continue to learn with us, our new exhibit "Play Ball!: The

Rehoboth Milkmaids" is on display at the Museum and online as a virtual exhibit on our website. There you will find information about the team, artifacts we've collected from their glory days, and programming for students K-12. We've also adapted our elementary age Rehoboth history and geography activities to be available online and free for anyone who visits our website. Our genealogy group continues to meet monthly, a 2021 speaker series is in the works, and a special members event will be announced this spring.

Stay active in our time physically apart. I can't wait to see you all again. Until then, stay safe.

*Danielle DiGiacomo, Director*



# BLANDING PUBLIC LIBRARY

In preparation for writing this message, I looked back to the message I wrote in January 2020 and laughed. We were so innocent of all of the challenges to come our way!

I am proud of the services we have been able to provide to our community, even when the library doors have been closed this year such as, curbside pick-up, book and movie recommendations, a selection of museum passes, parking lot Wi-Fi, and more.

We missed sharing activities and special events with our friends, but we developed some creative substitutes like the outdoor Story Walks to enjoy a story and our beautiful pollinator garden, Take-and-Make Crafts, our Flags of Hope display, and even an outdoor Halloween Hunt. We also presented online programs including Story Times, puppet stories, music for children, workshops, and the monthly Blanding Book Club.

More than ever, we saw our patrons take advantage of the convenient 24/7 access to online content provided by our membership in the SAILS Library Network, especially the Ebooks, streaming audiobooks, and streaming videos from Overdrive, and growing interest in the animated talking pictures books in TumbleBook Library and more than 50 online databases.

We received several book donations this year, the result of people being home with time to go through their possessions and pass along some gently used (and sometimes brand new!) books to

others. Although the Friends of the Blanding Library were not able to hold their annual book sale in Goff Hall this past October, they adjusted and set up an ongoing book sale in the Hall. When the building is open to visitors, people are welcome to browse through the available books and take some home for only \$1 apiece.

One thing we've learned this year is that the Library is much more than a building. We've found new ways to connect with and serve our community, and many of these new enterprises will continue even once face masks and hand sanitizer are a faint memory.

We wish everyone a happy new year and hope to see you at the Library for contactless curbside service, or back inside, looking through our book selection as soon as it is safe to gather together again!

*Whitney Pape, Director*



Flags of Hope outside Blanding Library



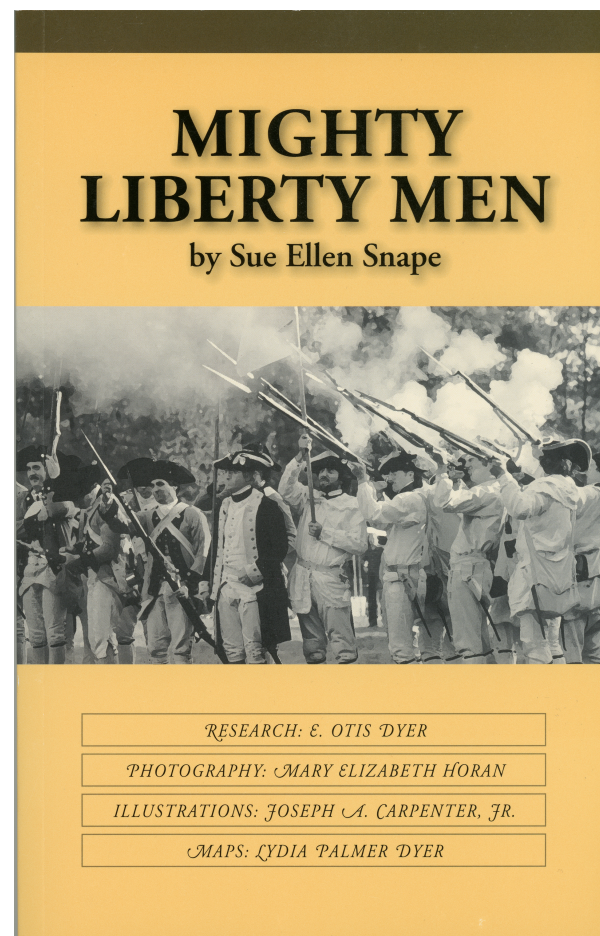
# Squire Darby of Rehoboth, Massachusetts

Tom Ebels, Jr., RAS Member

Following my successful application to the Sons of the American Revolution through my fifth great-grandfather, Squire Darby, I hit a brick wall in my research. Other than a few references in Squire Darby's request for a Revolutionary War pension and his parents' marriage record, I had no proven link to Rehoboth. Then, I was introduced to *Mighty Liberty Men*, by Sue Ellen Snape. I found additional references and developed a method of inquiry that I believe could be applied to many Rehoboth Revolutionary War soldiers and their families.

The method I employed was simple; first use *Mighty Liberty Men* as a base, then search Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War for references to Rehoboth and Squire Darby. Next, combine the information from these sources with information found in other sources such as military pension requests, tax records, county and town histories of Rehoboth, Taunton, and Norton. Finally, compile the facts to create a more complete picture of the Darby family.

First, I found some new clues in *Mighty Liberty Men* that helped me link the Darby Family to Rehoboth. For example, "Samuel Darby who lived in North Rehoboth, ran a small [joining] shop in conjunction with his farm."



In the Bibliography, the source of the information for Samuel Darby is listed as the 1771 Tax List. John Darby's home is shown on the map on page 122.

Based on that information, I investigated the Tax list of 1771. I found that the Rehoboth Town Tax Lists of 1759, 1765, and 1769 are published and a digital copy is available through the Hathi Trust web site.

In addition to the 1771 Tax List, Samuel Darby and John Darby are listed in these lists. Since Squire Darby is not listed in *Mighty Liberty Men* my next step was to review the Massachusetts Secretary of State Records contained in the Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War database.

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1) Bowen, Richard LeBaron. *Early Rehoboth: Documented Historical Studies of Families and Events in This Plymouth Colony Township Rehoboth, Mass.*, Priv. print. [by the Rumford press, Concord, N. H.] 1945, page 95, digital images, Hathi Trust (<https://babel.hathitrust.org: web site accessed 25 April 2020>).



A great test of the method is the example of the Bristol Alarm. “On December 8 [1776], every available man in town was called to Bristol Rhode Island, a few short miles from home, just north of the British who were landing at Newport.”<sup>2</sup> Squire Darby recalls the alarm in his affidavit: “... in the month of December in the year Seventeen Hundred Seventy-six he volunteered in the militia at Rehoboth in the County of Bristol in the State of Massachusetts and marched to Bristol in Rhode Island that he served sixteen days in this company commanded by Simeon Cole, who did not proceed on this March. The officers attending were John Dryer First Lieutenant and Isaac Brown Ensign.”<sup>3</sup>

According to page 429 of Volume 4 of the Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War—Squire Darby served under “Lieut. John Dryer’s co., Col. Thomas Carpenter’s regt.; service 16 days; company marched from Rehoboth to Bristol R.I., on the alarm of Dec. 8, 1776.”<sup>4</sup> The officers Darby testifies that he served under were all members of the Rehoboth Militia. Captain Simeon Cole, “who did not proceed on the march”, was in fact, the Captain of the Company.<sup>5</sup> Lieutenant John Dryer was one of the Town of Rehoboth’s Minutemen and was slain in battle on August 29, 1778 in Rhode Island.<sup>6</sup>

Per the tax records and map in *Mighty Liberty Men*, John Dryer was a long time neighbor to the Darby Family. Isaac Brown is listed as one of the Town’s Minutemen as well. Colonel Thomas Carpenter was the commander of the Regiment, and had been a member of the Committee of Correspondence and Constable prior to the Revolutionary War. As historical context, the Rehoboth men returned from Bristol, Rhode Island on the same day that General Washington was preparing to cross the Delaware River.



John Darby and John Dryer’s homes found on a 1776 map. *Mighty Liberty Men*, pg 122

2) Sue Ellen Snape, *Mighty Liberty Men*, (Taunton Massachusetts, William S. Suffold 1976), Pg. 90.

3) Squier Darby, Revolutionary War pension file no. R 2662, RG 15, NA-Washington DC.

4) Massachusetts Secretary of State. pg. 429.

5) Reverend George A. Tilton, A.M., *A History of Rehoboth Massachusetts, Its History for 275 Years, 1643-1918*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Published by the Author, 1918), pg. 129.

6) *Ibid.*, pg. 135.

7) Sue Ellen Snape, *Mighty Liberty Men*, (Taunton Massachusetts, William S. Suffold 1976), Pg. 122.

8) *Ibid.*, pg. 121.

9) *Ibid.*, pg. 125.



To further test my method, I conducted a brief search of Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailor in the Revolutionary War on Ancestry.com. I located 1,385 entries for Rehoboth men. For instance, there is no mention of Joseph Joy, or any member of the Joy Family members in *Mighty Liberty Men*. However, Joseph Joy is mentioned on Page 1014 of Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors and haes from Rehoboth. Obadiah Joy is shown on the tax lists 1759-1771. Joseph Joy applied for a pension and Obadiah Joy submitted an affidavit in support of Joseph's request. Obadiah Joy testifies that: "Joseph Joy now of Putney, [Windham, Vermont], lived at Rehoboth in the State of Massachusetts [in 1775]." <sup>10</sup>

Undoubtedly there are other mighty liberty men of Rehoboth like Squire Darby and Joseph Joy, whose stories are awaiting discovery in the online archives.

As we approach the 250th Anniversary of the beginning of the Revolutionary War, I believe we need to re-examine the lives of the mighty liberty men of Rehoboth. We could adopt Rehoboth soldiers from the Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors and apply the above method broadly to create a richer, fuller picture for many more of the Revolutionary War Veterans of Rehoboth. I believe we owe it to our Ancestors to tell these stories. We can take this opportunity and accomplish something great for the men and families of Rehoboth.

#### *Editor's Note:*

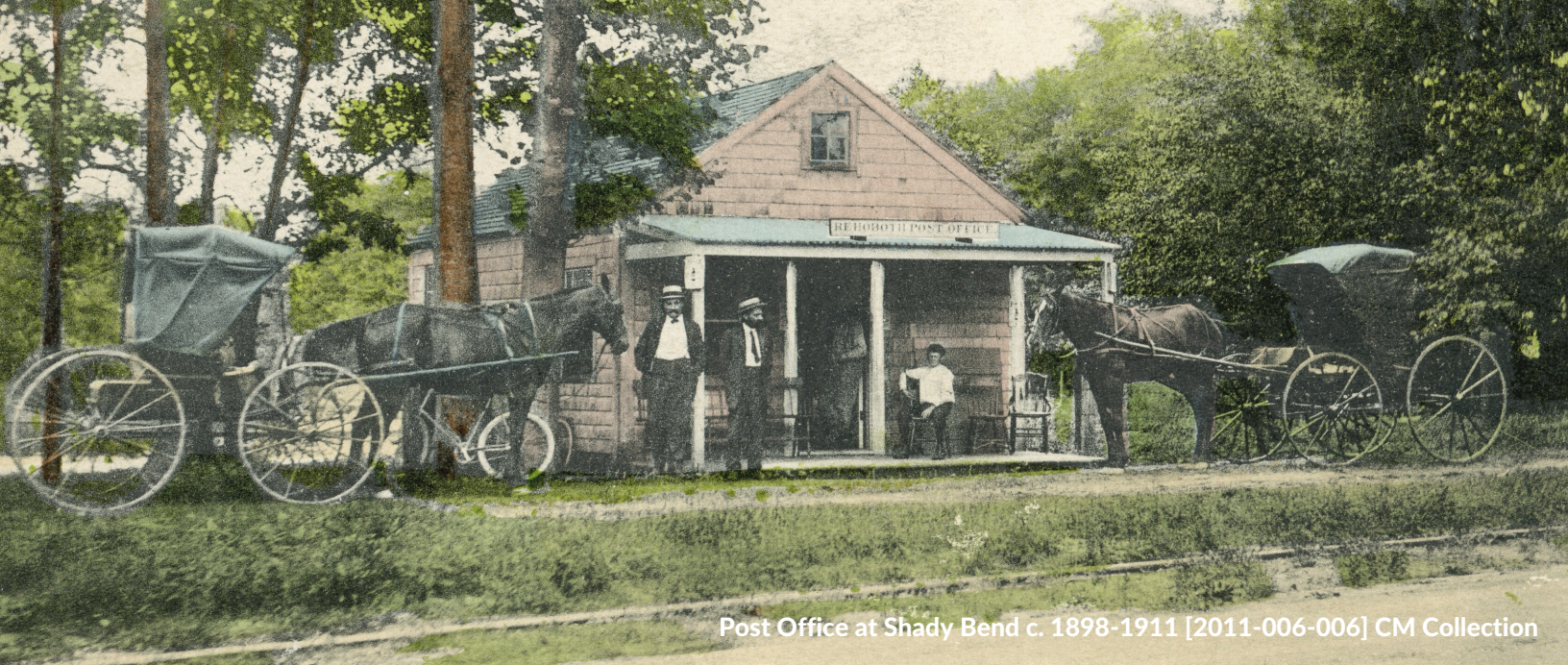
*Our nation will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026. One of the ways the Carpenter Museum and E. Otis Dyer Research Center are recognizing this celebration is by digitizing our records of Revolutionary War Soldiers and Sailors from Rehoboth. The genealogist and historian, Robert S. Trim (1918-1988) compiled information about the nearly 3,000 veterans by hand. This source is currently available in the Dyer Research Center. It is our hope that a digital version will be available to members through our website before the anniversary. To volunteer for the Museum and Research Center email [info@rehobothantiquarian.org](mailto:info@rehobothantiquarian.org).*

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10) <https://www.fold3.com/image/24628745>







## WHAT'S NEW SHADY BEND?

Lende McMullen,  
Research Manager  
E. Otis Dyer  
Research Center

The little yellow house known as Shady Bend that stands beside the pond in Rehoboth Village has been a familiar sight to Rehoboth residents for over two centuries. Yes, that's right! There's a marker on it that states it was built c. 1820.

Once very pleasing to the eye, this little building has served many functions in the village. It was originally built as an office for the Union Manufacturing Company, a cotton factory that operated for nearly 100 years (1809-1898) across the street. It also was a temporary post office after the disastrous village fire of 1896 in which Postmaster John C. Marvel's neighbor's home and his own burned to the ground.

In 1909, newly appointed Postmaster Edward F. Earle set up his office at the former mill office before moving to the other side of the church on Bay State Road. The little building became a storage place for library books after the Goff Hall fire of 1911.

From 1920 to 1922, the little building really began to shine when Christopher Viall's daughter, Annie Gilman (1885-1977), leased the building and operated it as a tearoom.

Annie was the person to christen the house "Shady Bend," after the picturesque canopy of village elms that protected it from the summer sun and its location on the bend in the roadway. Guests at the teahouse sat at tables on the lawn, often arriving by trolley car, which operated between Taunton and Providence and ran through Rehoboth Village from 1898-1927. There, guests reaped the benefits of Rehoboth's open air by the pond and waterfall and enjoyed their refreshment of a sandwich, tea, and dessert.

Earle S. Carpenter (1902-1998) continued to run the teahouse from 1922 to 1924, and for a short while, Oscar A. G. Berghman (1906-1992), the town's first full-fledged Chief of Police, appointed in 1944, ran a barber shop there.



For a number of years, the building was closed, but in 1939 Enoch A. Carpenter (1886-1964) and his wife, Elsie, who lived around the corner on Locust Avenue, purchased the building from the Marvel family and used it as a summer retreat. I'm sure they thought it lovely to bring their supper to the little house. They could relax or enjoy reading while they listened to the water fall over the large stones nearby.

In 1942, the Carpenters added an ell to the house and rented it out. Herbert F. Hall resided there for a time in the 1960s and then James J. Blackwood in 1970s. Finally, its last resident, Danny Vandenberg and his sheep dog "Jenny" could be seen out for walks in the village during the late 90s until his passing in 2004.

Situated on the Palmer River beside land owned by the Town of Rehoboth Conservation Commission, which includes the village dam and waterfall, "Shady Bend" encompasses an open space of water and woodland views and additionally, one of the Blanding Library.



Shady Bend Tea Shop, 1920  
[2005-002-120] CM Collection



Shady Bend , May 1954 [2005-002-121] CM Collection

SHADY BEND	
Tea Shop,	
Rehoboth, Mass.	
Sliced Ham, Egg Salad, Muffin	.50
Sliced Ham, Potato Salad, Muffin	.50
Fried Ham and Eggs, Muffin	.50
Egg Salad	.35
Potato Salad	.25
Sandwiches	
Chicken Salad and Tomato	.25
Fried Ham and Egg	.25
Chicken Salad	.20
Fried Ham	.20
Toasted Cheese	.15
Sliced Ham	.15
Tomato and Lettuce Salad	.15
Egg Salad and Olive	.15
Ground Ham and Nut	.15
Cream Cheese and Olive	.10
" " Nut	.10
Ground Ham	.10
Egg Salad	.10
Lettuce Salad	.10
Sliced Cheese	.10
Marmalade	.10
Jelly and Nut	.10
Jelly	.05
Peanut Butter	.05
Buttered Toast	.10
" " + Marmalade	.25

Desserts	
Home-made Pie	.10
Home-made Cake	.10
Apple Pie and Ice Cream	.15
Ice Cream	.10 & .15
College Ices	.20
Strawberry Cherry	Raspberry
Pineapple	Maple Walnut Fudge
Foams	.15
Strawberry	Orange
Raspberry	Ginger
Sundaes	
Banana Royal	.20
Banana Split	.25
Sweet Sixteen	.25
Fudge Nut	.25
Cherry Walnut	.25
Rehoboth Beauty	.30
Drinks	
Hot Tea	.10
Iced Tea	.10
Milk	.05
Orange Ade	.08
Sarsaperilla	.08
Root Beer	.08
Lemon and Lime	.08
Hot Coffe	.10
Iced Coffe	.10
Moxie	.10
Ginger Ale	.08
Birch Beer	.08
Raspberry	.08
Strawberry	.08

Shady Bend Tea Shop Menu 1922-1924  
[1900-370-001] CM Collection



Unfortunately, the tea room has been sorely neglected and has been in this condition for many years. This eyesore is not only detrimental to nearby property owners, to Rehoboth as a town, but is also unacceptable in terms of preserving Rehoboth's historical past.

Restoration of the village cottage is possible. It's fun to think of the many ways the little building could serve the community. Maybe someday soon Shady Bend will see a new life.



Shady Bend, January 2021.  
Photo Courtesy of Museum volunteer, Bob McMullen

## ARTS IN THE VILLAGE UPDATE

With encouraging news about a COVID-19 vaccine, we are looking ahead to Arts in the Village's 20th season, which we hope will take place from the fall of 2021 to the spring of 2022 at Goff Memorial Hall. As always, we would be presenting outstanding musicians and programs. Look for reports of our progress in future RAS membership emails and direct communications with our subscribers.

The 20th season was scheduled to start October 2020 but for the safety of performers and audience members had to be postponed.

The 19th season of Arts in the Village began very well. Our audience base grew with every event, and concert-goers expressed their pleasure and enjoyment when attending the first three concerts. Due to the coronavirus, the last two concerts had to be canceled. We are thankful to those generous subscribers who donated their fees for the cancelled concerts to support Arts in the Village.

We are living through an unprecedented time in our lives, and we hope that you and all of your loved ones are well. See you again soon.



# ALL AROUND US

## AMERICAN ELM AND THE WHEELWRIGHT'S SHOP

Peter Fedoryk

LOIS F. MCNEIL FELLOW AT THE WINTERTHUR MUSEUM, GARDEN & LIBRARY AND A M.A. CANDIDATE IN AMERICAN MATERIAL CULTURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

Ezekiel Smith II (1747-1834) lived and worked as a wheelwright in Rehoboth for nearly sixty years. Records indicate he moved to Rehoboth in his early twenties with his wife and young son. His account book, which survives in the collection of the Winterthur Museum, informs not only on his day-to-day work, but reveals his intriguing relationship with the environmental landscape around him. In his trade Smith specifically interacted with trees and wood, transforming them into the objects that people needed for everyday life. As these wooden objects left his shop, they left undeniable impressions on the landscape that have shaped our world today.

Smith lived in the vicinity of Great Meadow Hill, in an area filled with countless Pecks, Blisses, Carpenters, Hixes, and Wheelers—names

longstanding in Rehoboth's history. He kept an account of repair work done at gristmills nearby, as well as Ebenezer Peck's forge and sawmill, located on Palmer River just east of Anawan Street. Skilled craftspeople, like Smith, were responsible for building and maintaining the infrastructure of their communities. He relied on specific building materials for varied work, and the woodlots of Rehoboth offered plenty of options. Birch (*Betula*), maple (*Acer*), and walnut (*Juglans*) trees were popular selections for all manner of furniture. Chestnut (*Castanea*) was used in building and construction, as were cedar (*Cedrus*) and pine (*Pinus*). Elm (*Ulmus*), oak (*Quercus*), and ash (*Fraxinus*) were often found in wagon and wheel construction.

On December twentieth in 1774, Smith paid

Jathniel Peck, and his son James, eight shillings to spend the day drawing and cutting wood. He paid an additional eight shillings for a very specific piece of timber, a “log for hubs.” As a wheelwright, hubs were quite literally at the center of his profession. A cart or wagon wheel was made of three parts—the hub, the spokes, and the felloes (segments of the outer rim). Each type of component was often crafted from a different kind of wood. Ash wood had flexibility that provided the outer rim of the wheel with shock absorption. Oak, made into spokes, was rigid and helped transfer the pressure of use to the center of the wheel. Elm was commonly used for the hub because its interlocked grain structure could withstand immense pressure without splitting. Without an elm hub keeping everything together, a wheel’s life would be short lived.

The landscape around trees shapes the wood that grows inside, producing variation even among a single species. Environmental factors like soil composition, local weather patterns, and nutrient availability over the duration of the tree’s lifetime affect its size, form, and grain consistency. It was up to the wheelwright to select individual pieces from forests of individual trees for use in their work. Though we don’t know when or where Smith trained as a wheelwright, his apprenticeship would have introduced him to this intersection of environmental and craft knowledge. In his account book Smith knew the species names for woods like oak and ash, however more frequently he made references to types of wood based on their uses. In addition to buying a “log for hubs” from Jathniel, at a later date he also buys a “log for fellows” from Philip Wheeler. Smith’s phrasing reveals a kind of literacy unfamiliar to those who do not work in the trade, conflating objects with the trees from

which they came. Some species of trees are still known today by similar object-based nomenclature, like the canoe birch (*B. papyrifera*) and its associated use in making bark watercraft.

Once the timber was selected, ash felloes were sawn into curved forms, oak spokes were planed down with a spokeshave, and elm hubs were turned on a lathe. After mortising, tenoning, hammering, and tapping, these components became a wheel, usually finished with a tire of iron set around the rim. Wheels were truly composite objects, made of diverse wooden pieces from disparate places in a forest that experienced dramatic transformation—and the life of these objects only began in the wheelwright’s shop.

Wagon and cartwheels left Smith’s shop in droves, heading out into the world to facilitate acts of transportation. They carried food, seeds, coal, firewood, furniture, and trading goods across Rehoboth. They brought people and their possessions to Pawtucket, Swansea, Seekonk, and Providence. One map of Rehoboth, drawn in 1795, shows a network of roads intersecting across the town (Fig. 1). These roadways, if left alone, would cease to be passable as vegetation reclaimed their untrodden lanes. Several main roads of Rehoboth existed long before European invaders claimed the land for themselves. From the footpaths of the Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Massachusett came the bridle trails and cart paths of European colonizers. People, and an array of vehicles, have carved these roadways into the topography of the landscape over hundreds of years. Wheels, like those made in Smith’s shop, were constantly and quietly taking part in terraforming vast swathes of land.





As recently as the early twentieth century, the American elm (*U. americana*) was found in great numbers across the country. Elms held a storied and long standing role as ideal shade trees in urban environments. Even before Ezekiel Smith II was born, these trees were a staple in the visual aesthetic of North American colonial settlements. It was, unfortunately, this kind of continued planting over the course of three hundred years that ultimately led to the decline of the entire species. The architectural effect of its form encouraged city and town planners to line streets with rows of elms. Their trunks stood like pillars in a cathedral and their canopies met high above, creating a natural tunnel over urban and suburban roads. As elms spread through large cities and small towns across America, people were changing the ecology of their continent.

From its role as a single species populating diverse forests, elm became a monoculture in these developed centers. To make matters worse, cultivation methods encouraged cloning trees with desirable forms rather than allowing for diversity in propagation. All it would take was a single, fast spreading disease to wipe out continental populations.

The disease arrived in North America in 1931. It was a fungus commonly known as Dutch Elm Disease, given the name after Dutch phytopathologist Bea Schwartz and Dutch researcher Christine Buisman proved instrumental in diagnosing the cause of elm die-offs in Europe during the 1920s.



**Figure 2**

Town Plans—1830, 1830. (SC1/Series48X) Courtesy of the Massachusetts Archives. Boston, MA.



Imported logs to America quickly produced a similarly rapid infection rate across all of the United States. Alongside the fungus, shipments were also carrying European bark beetles. These insects were efficient carriers of the fungus as they burrowed under the bark of elms. Town and city planning over the past centuries ensured that the beetles rarely needed to travel far to encounter the next tree. Whereas genetic diversity within a species might present the possibility that at least a portion of a population might develop immunity to an infectious disease, our methods of propagation efficiently ensured that this was not the case for elms. The dominoes had been set and began to fall.

The results were catastrophic and succeeded at changing continental ecosystems yet again. By the late-twentieth century there was hardly any part of the country unaffected. In 1977 alone, the city of Minneapolis marked just under 32,000 infected trees for removal. These were not small trees either, many likely planted just after the turn of the twentieth century. Mature elm trees were plucked from the landscape, never to return. In North America, the culpable fungus is recognized today as a naturalized species. Its removal from our ecosystems is considered impossible. As it wiped out tens of millions of elm trees, the natural architecture of American town and cityscapes were irreparably erased. In the case of the elm, the role of humans in its extirpation can be identified at nearly every stage. It is a story of environmental decline.

In the face of this material absence, it becomes easy to forget history. Historic touchstones, like the extant objects found in museums, provide tangible connections to the times that came before us.

Without elms around us it can be easy to forget all that they contributed to our world today. By following their eighteenth century lives from the forest, to wheelwright's shop, to the roads that they helped to physically maintain, we recognize their legacy all around us. Our world's ecology will continue to change over the coming years, and it will become increasingly important to follow the meandering interactions of the past that show how human histories are intertwined with environmental histories. In Rehoboth, Elm Street intersects with Route 118 on Moulton Street south of Winthrop Street and just west of the Carpenter Museum. Its signpost now stands in representation of the eponymous trees that once lined roads across the town. But it isn't just Elm Street that echoes of their history. It's all of the roadways that we unwittingly travel every day, which were carved into the landscape, by people and trees alike, long before concrete and yellow lines were laid to cover them.

For Further Reading See:

Thomas Campanella, *Republic of Shade: New England and the American Elm* (Yale University Press, 2003)

George Henry Tilton, *A History of Rehoboth, Massachusetts* (Published by the author, 1918)

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (Hill and Wang, 1983)

Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries* (Greystone Books, 2015)



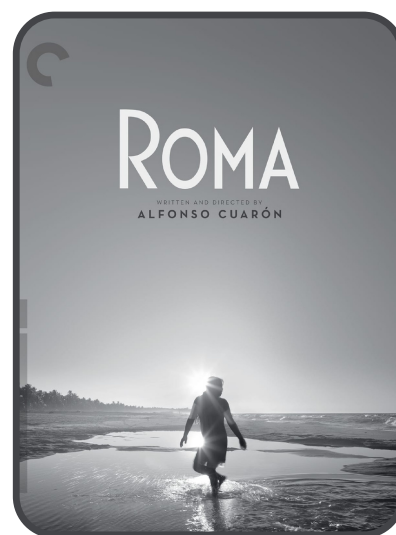
# Take a Trip! Foreign Film Recommendations from Blanding Library

Whitney Pape  
Library Director

When selecting DVDs from the Library's collection to bring home, I often find myself apologizing to my husband that I've chosen another movie he has to "read." In other words, yet another foreign film with subtitles. The nice thing about foreign DVDs, however, is that the industry has only bothered to release the title in a foreign country if it's incredibly popular, critically acclaimed, or maybe won some awards. It's already a select group, the best of the best. And as much as he may complain about the subtitles, my fellow viewer seldom regrets the effort.

I'd like to share some foreign films from the Library's collection that we've viewed recently. Three are recent, and I came across the other two because they hadn't circulated in a while and I wanted to see if they were worth keeping in the collection.

If you're looking for more recommendations, you can always call the Library (508-252-4236) for some guidance. Rotten Tomatoes is a website whose evaluations I find reliable, and Metacritic aggregates ratings from several sources. IMDb also provides a Metascore for critically reviewed films.



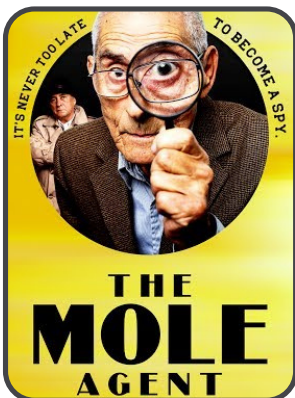
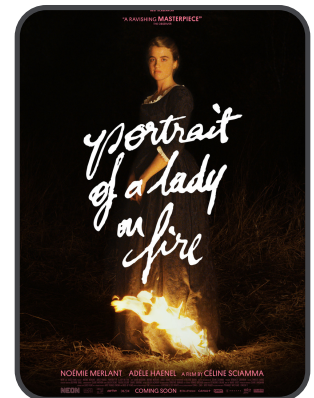
*Roma*, the 2018 film from Alphonso Cuarón (Y tu mamá también, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Gravity), received ten nominations at the 2019 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, in spite of being a foreign language film. It won Best Foreign Language Film, Best Director, and Cinematography. It's a beautiful film, so the Cinematography nod is well earned. The movie follows the life of a live-in housekeeper of a middle-class family, as a semi-autobiographical take on Cuarón's upbringing in the Colonia Roma neighborhood of Mexico City. This depiction of an ordinary life has intimacy, pain, and humor, an emotional exploration of the director's memory.

***Romantics Anonymous***, from 2010, was an endearing tale of two incredibly socially awkward people trying to allow themselves to find and enjoy love. It does not hurt that she is an expert chocolate maker and he owns a small chocolate factory, both from the standpoint of the plot and my level of personal interest in the story. I must warn you that I was compelled to buy some very expensive artisanal chocolates from Maine after watching this film. I was also charmed by the protagonist's singing of "I Have Confidence" from *The Sound of Music* in French whenever she faced life's challenges. It was a true cinematic confection.



***Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed*** (2013, set in 1966) tells the story of an English teacher and die-hard Beatles fan who takes a 200 mile road trip to the coast of Spain in the hopes of meeting and speaking with John Lennon, who is shooting *How I Won the War* on location there. On the way he picks up two hitchhikers, and the unlikely trio follow their dreams and look for their own freedom. The movie is sweet and melancholy at the same time, both funny and poignant. Then again, I'm a huge Beatles fan and have spent the past year tuned to the Beatles channel on Sirius XM instead of the news, so I may have been primed for this one.

***Portrait of a Lady on Fire*** (2019) is set in France in the late 18th century. The film tells the story of a forbidden affair between an aristocrat and a painter commissioned to paint her portrait. It was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival, and won the Queer Palm at Cannes, as well as the award for Best Screenplay at Cannes. The film was nominated for a Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The love story is compelling, but the unsentimental portrayal of women's circumstances really gives the film its weight.



***The Mole Agent*** (2020) is part comedy, part film noir, and part documentary, and ultimately a meditation on end-of-life quality and society's tendency to forget the elderly. The main character, Sergio, age 83, is hired by a private investigator in Chile who needs someone to work as a mole at a retirement home where a client of his suspects the caretakers of elder abuse. He's tasked with learning how to use a smartphone, pen camera, and eyeglass camera, and the challenges of mastering WhatsApp, FaceTime, and the other gadgetry provide a lot of the humor of the film. Sergio's caring heart and genuine friendships at the retirement home distract him from his mission and reveal the loneliness of his fellow residents.



# THE MYSTERY OF A MOTHER'S GRAVESTONE

Beverly Baker,  
CHAIRMAN OF THE REHOBOTH  
CEMETERY COMMISSION  
AND RAS VICE-PRESIDENT

MOTHER. That was the only word written on the stone. The stone was cut and carved from a beautiful pink granite piece. It was obviously a headstone, found on a property in the Perryville section of Rehoboth. No one knew how long it had been there. Any persons of knowledge of the stone had long passed or moved away taking the information with them. The house, or should it be said houses, had been sold several times with no mention of it.

It was not just any house, though. It was historic, especially to the area known as Perryville. Perryville was named after the Ezra Perry family who operated a turning mill at the Perryville dam. This house is the only one of its kind ever known with a very unusual, deeded feature. The house itself sits on two separate properties with the dividing line going through the middle of the house and it was built that way intentionally. One might compare it to a condominium, similar but not the same idea. Each owner is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of his own side of the house. This odd arrangement is confirmed by following the deeds of the separate properties, including the construction of the house in about 1840.



Ezra Perry married Betsey Bliss in 1786. According to the information published by the Rehoboth Historical Commission pamphlet guide to historic sites, Ezra Perry first ran a turning mill on Ash Street, then in the early 1800's, due to a natural flooding disaster, the Perry family moved the operation to what is known today as the Perryville neighborhood, purchasing the property from John Butterworth who ran a sawmill and gristmill there. It is likely that Otis Perry, son of Ezra Perry, took over the operation when his father died in 1850. Otis would live there until his death in 1890.

The 200-year-old tangled trail of Books and Pages from the Bristol County Registry of Deeds showed that the house was built by Otis Perry together with his distant cousin Simeon Walker, Jr. Simeon was a machinist living in Seekonk. Otis was a miller taking after his father, Ezra, in Rehoboth. Both Simeon and Otis were bachelors in 1840. Simeon died young as a bachelor. Otis Perry would remain a bachelor for his entire 83 years.

Simeon Walker, Jr. died of consumption at the age of 32 in 1843. His will was executed by his father, also Simeon, such a solemn task for a father. The will lists, among machinist tools, an unfinished half of a house in the town of Rehoboth on a house lot. The half house, unfinished was eventually sold at auction two years after Simeon's death.

Simeon's half was purchased by Asaph Bliss, who married Nancy Perry, sister to Otis Perry. After Asaph died in 1861, the half house was purchased at auction by Hiram D. Fuller in 1862. Otis Perry also leased part of his land to Hiram Fuller, a blacksmith and carriage maker to build a shop. An 1870 Federal census shows three families living there - Otis Perry and a housekeeper, Hiram Fuller and his family, six in all, and a wheelwright named Francis Barney and his wife Julia. Another unusual record is that of a 20-year lease to Hiram Fuller as recorded in a deed from Bristol County Registry of Deeds, Book 294, pages 241 and 242 for building a blacksmith shop on Otis' side of the land. This deed also mentions a wheelwright on the property and stipulates the right to come and go from the wheelwright shop.

Further research for the Perry family discovered that Otis Perry's will in 1890 directs the executor, who is his nephew, to erect a monument with headstones for his parents, Ezra and Betsy, and himself. The plot was to have granite curbing. That monument has been found at the Rehoboth Village Cemetery.

The Ezra Perry plot at the Village Cemetery is a neat little piece of ground with a 9-foot-tall upright pink granite monument. The monument stands in beautiful stark contrast to the other drab gray and weathered white obelisks, permanent family trophies. There are four granite posts that mark the corners. The first to

be laid to rest here is a child, sadly not quite a year old. His name was Otis T. Perry who died in 1812. His name stands alone on the sunny southwest side of the monument. On the sunless northwest side are the names of Ezra Perry, his wife Betsey, and Otis, who had the monument created after his death. Curiously, there are no "MOTHER" "FATHER" or "OTIS" headstones on the lot and no granite curbing as stipulated in the will. The pink granite of this monument and the "MOTHER" headstone that was found at Otis Perry's home are a match. It is speculated that since the granite material matches the monument and since a headstone for "MOTHER" was supposed to be on the plot, the stone found is that of Otis Perry's mother, Betsey (Bliss) Perry.

It is unknown if Otis Perry's final wishes were ever completely fulfilled. Regulations were put in place limiting plots to one upright stone or monument and no curbing, due to ease of maintenance. The cemetery was growing larger and it took too long to trim around every stone. It is impossible for modern mowing equipment to maintain the plot due to the curbing. In observing similar plots at the Village Cemetery, some older sites do have curbing and more than one upright stone, so it is not clear if the headstones and curbing of the Perry plot were removed due to cemetery regulations or if they were ever installed at the first place. Perhaps the estate had run out of funds? The 'why' of it all remains a mystery.





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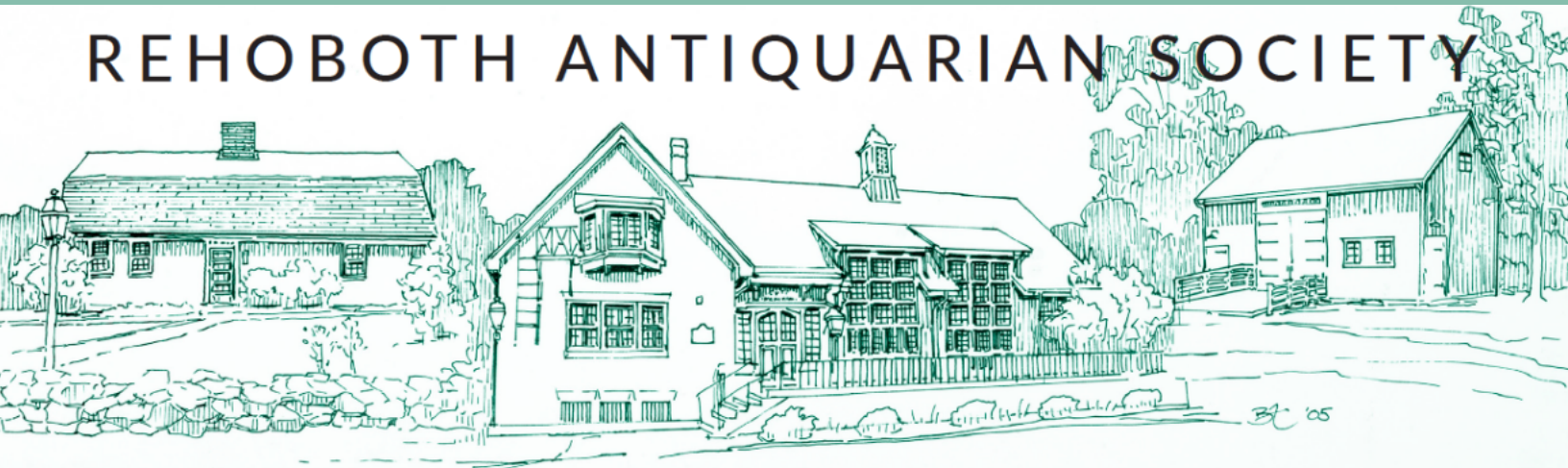
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