

# HIGHLIGHT

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*The Newsletter of the High Street Hill Association*

*December 2005*

*Join your neighbors*

## CHRISTMAS EVE CAROLING ON THE GREEN

LED BY

CORNELIA MCMURTRIE



**DECEMBER 24 AT 5:45PM**

BRING FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND A WIND-  
PROTECTED CANDLE TO THE UPLAND ROAD GREEN

## Amazon At High Street Hill

Are you shopping online at Amazon for the holidays? Why not check out the HSHA Amazon at High Street Hill webpage?

Here you'll find books about Brookline and historic preservation and a link to the Amazon homepage.

Anytime you make a purchase (not just for books) at Amazon through this link you'll help support the HSHA and its neighborhood activities. The prices are the same-- there is no extra fee.

Visit [www.highstreethill.org](http://www.highstreethill.org) and bookmark our Amazon link in your browser for all your Amazon purchases.

## Meet Your Rep

You are invited to join the Board of the HSHA as we sit down with **State Representative Jeffery Sanchez** to discuss issues that concern Brookline and Precinct 5.

Several topics for discussion include:

- Revitalization of the Route 9 corridor
- Increasing town's healthcare costs
- Funding for the Muddy River Restoration
- Status of Pinebank at Jamaica Pond
- Affordable housing

The meeting will be at 7:30PM on Monday, December 12th, at the home of Betsy Shure Gross, 25 Edgehill Road.

RSVP to Rob at 566-7334 or [robdaves@rcn.com](mailto:robdaves@rcn.com).

## Philbrick Homestead to be protected

Last month the Town Selectmen approved a request for a preservation easement from the owners of the historic Philbrick-Tappan house at 182 Walnut Street. This deed restriction will ensure that the elegant stone house along with its surrounding property will forever remain as it looks today. The large lot had by right the potential to be subdivided into seven building lots.



*the "Heart of Pill Hill"*

As the home of Edward Philbrick the abolitionist and a key stop in the Underground Railroad, 182 Walnut Street represents a significant period in American and Town history. Through his ideas and leadership in the areas of anti-slavery, philosophy of religion and engineering, Philbrick helped attract many of the important intellectuals of his time to settle nearby and helped to make Pill Hill the vibrant neighborhood that it was and continues to be.

We who are fortunate to pass daily by the long grey fence and open space along 182 Walnut Street appreciate the quiet dignity of the gently sloping lawns and treed scenery. It is remarkable that such a large part of the original property remains intact and we thank **Eliot Wadsworth** and his family for the preserving this heart of Pill Hill for future generations.

For more about the Philbrick House see: *182 Walnut Street, A History* by Dr. Walter S. Burrage at [www.highstreethill.org/history](http://www.highstreethill.org/history)

## Ladies Uncovered at 76 High St.

Since 1979 my husband and I have lived in the “weird” house on High Street with the gargoyles and sunflowers. It was designed by Clarence Luce and was built in 1880 for Mr. Edward Stanwood, publisher of “Youth’s Companion,” a popular periodical. Queen Anne Revival in style, its exterior explodes with decorative details composed from a variety of materials including brick, rusticated granite, terra cotta, slate and fish scale shingles. Elaborately cast designs known as grotesques adorn the main façade while fantastic carved wooden gargoyles peer down from the eaves. It its time, the house became known as “the house covered with sunflowers and devils.”

When we moved into the house, we were told that there were four original murals underneath the wallpaper in the front hall, and that these murals were done by the same artist who had designed a stained glass window near the front door. Some research led to American artist Thomas Wilmer Dewing (1851-1938), who was born in Boston, studied in Paris and later worked in New York and Boston. He is well-known for depicting women of the day in elegant dresses, often in pre-Raphaelite style. We learned that Dewing was also commissioned by the Stanwood family to paint an oil, called “The Spinner”, to be hung above the large fireplace in our parlour room. The year after the house was built Dewing showed both the stained glass window (executed by one Frank Hill Smith) and “The Spinner” at the St. Botolph Club in Boston. It was fun to discover this, as my husband is a member of this club! Unfortunately, “The Spinner” now is owned by the Brigham Young University Museum, having been sold by the heirs of Mr. Stanwood.

To learn more, we contacted Dr Susan Hobbs, a research associate, who had been working on a Thomas Dewing



*Weird and Wonderful*

catalog raisonné for the Smithsonian. She came to see the stained glass, and asked us to contact her if the paper was ever removed from the hallway.

When we were ready to begin the restoration project we contacted the Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities who put us in touch with Sara B. Chase, Preservation Consultant. She did some exploratory work on the murals underneath the wallpaper, as well as on the ceiling and cornice paints. She then removed the layers of wallpaper, and the surfaces were cleaned. Two Dewing standing ladies appeared, one on each side of the hallway, classically draped and holding cymbals. Of great surprise was the decoration uncovered in the vestibule. There the entire area was stenciled with yellow sunbursts overlapping on the light olive ground. On the south wall is a whimsical decoration consisting of butterflies, blossoms and a swag with a tiny faceless nude reclining. Sara subsequently restored the rest of the hallway (mainly the ceiling and cornices) to the original paint colors and decorations with the help of a young decorative painter named Lars Michelson (he now has a restoration business on Cape Cod). Dr Hobbs was delighted to see the Dewings when she came up to Boston!

We love living in the house “of sunflowers and devils” and try hard to keep it in the “spirit” of 1880.

Diana Post  
Hal Churchill

See a photo of the Dewing ladies  
at [www.highstreethill.org](http://www.highstreethill.org).

### Weilerstein Trio Concert

Wednesday, January 25 8PM  
Free  
New England Conservatory's  
Jordan Hall

The Weilerstein Trio, NEC's trio-in-residence, features Donald Weilerstein (violin), Vivian Hornik Weilerstein (piano) and their daughter Alisa (cello). The program will feature a premiere by NEC's Michael Gandolfi, as well as works by Dvorak. A CD of the Weilersteins performing works by Dvorak will be released a few days prior to the concert. Don and Vivian live on Irving Street.

## Recent HSHA Events Recap:

**Art & Design Tour** On Saturday, October 29, as snow flurries settled on our sidewalks, more than 40 neighbors gathered to enjoy a personal art collection, visit an artist's studio and tour 76 High Street. We ended the afternoon with a reception and tour at GASP Gallery on Boylston Street hosted by artist and gallery owner Magdalena Compos-Pons. Discussion was wide-ranging, covering topics from contemporary South African and Cuban-American social issues to Boston's 1800's architecture and fear in today's society.

*Special thanks to The Wine Gallery, 375 Boylston Street, for providing wine and glasses for our event.*

**Author's Series: Reception for Robert Kaufman** On Sunday, November 13, Board member Betsy Shure Gross and her husband Gary hosted a reception to celebrate the publication of neighbor Robert Kaufman's “Blockology”. Seated by the fire, neighbors enjoyed Robert's slide presentation of his walking journeys though lower Manhattan, a lively discussion of the changing dynamics of New York City neighborhoods, and a book signing. To learn more about Robert's work, please visit his website: [www.turningcornerspress.com](http://www.turningcornerspress.com).

If you are interested in coordinating/hosting an author's event, please contact Marie Schick, 617-731-1838 or [mschick@nni.com](mailto:mschick@nni.com)