

# **The Duston-Dustin Family Association**

## **Minutes of the 116<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, August 8, 2020**

### ***Virtual Meeting Via Zoom***

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. EDT. Officers present on the call were:

- President John E. Dustin
- Vice President David W. Jellison
- Treasurer Peter G. Dustin
- Historian Craig Richardson
- Secretary David A. Dustin.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

2. The Secretary read the minutes from the 115<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, which were accepted as presented.

3. The Treasurer read the Treasurer's Report. His report was accepted as presented.

4. The Historian/Genealogist reported that he is editing volume one of the draft genealogy books created by his predecessor, which comprises the first five generations. Many new people are being added via new sources of data. A lot of female relatives are being added because the general practice to include all born with the surname Duston/Dustin/Dustan, with their spouses and children, but not continuing through grandchildren. As great grandson of a female Dustin, he said the books wouldn't currently include himself. He said that our family tree now numbers about 12,600 individuals. Asked about the Emerson line, he said it could be traced back to England, but doing so has not been a focus of his work. He said when people contact him with Hannah genealogy questions, he automatically adds any new relatives to the family tree. He said the easiest way to provide new family records is to point him at an existing on-line database, but data in any form would be fine, with an email to let him know what is going on.

5. The Secretary read the Secretary's Report, which was accepted as presented. With the President's concurrence, he reserved the more extensive New Business portion for later in the meeting. The Secretary reported the composition of the DDFA Executive Committee per last year's election:

- President John E. Dustin, Shrewsbury, MA.
- Vice President David W. Jellison, Amesbury, MA.
- Treasurer Peter G. Dustin, Ardmore, PA.
- Secretary David A. Dustin, Contoocook, NH
- Historian (Genealogist) Craig Richardson, Amherst, NH.

He reported that the following Executive Committee positions remain unoccupied and invited nominations:

- Assistant Secretary

- Assistant Historian (i.e., Assistant Genealogist). (Member Thomas Spitalere, an historian at the Buttonwoods Museum in Haverhill and officer of the Duston-Dustin Garrison House Association, Inc., later accepted a nomination for this position and was elected by acclamation.)

6. 2019 Membership Statistics. End-year active membership stood at 186, down slightly from 199 the year prior. We saw 14 expired Annual members and 5 deaths. Eleven life members joined another 161 existing Life members. We had 4 Annual members and 10 complimentary / institutional members.

7. Family Artifacts and the Buttonwoods Museum. In the wake of the Buttonwoods' de-accession of four boxes of "Duston" family artifacts two years ago, the Executive Committee is still awaiting a current list of family items remaining in the museum's custody. President John Dustin said the museum director had in 2019 pledged to provide that updated inventory. However, the onset of the COVID-19 crisis appears to have disrupted that commitment. The President reminded attendees that the museum faces a severe space constraint and can only retain items that conform to their collections management policy and which have a direct connection with Hannah Duston. For example, the museum was donated a "Hannah Duston" bed but it proved to be from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. "Hannah Duston's clock" had been donated, which a visiting expert later determined was not made until 1849.

In the meantime, the de-accessioned materials are stored in Secretary David Dustin's basement. They have been examined by the Secretary and President *Emeritus* Cedric H. Dustin Jr., who understand why the museum de-accessioned them. The question now is, what to do with assorted 19<sup>th</sup> Century family tintypes and photographs, old letters, odd bits of china, old DDFA printer's blocks, mittens, ladies' shawls and elements of clothing, Civil War enlistment records, and a family Bible? Meeting suggestions included auctioning them on ebay, returning such items to original donors if traceable after many decades, or finding another museum that would accept any items. Each suggestion entails considerable effort and pitfalls to carry out.

Historian Craig Richardson pointed out that the DDFA Constitution and By-laws contemplate a standing committee on monuments and relics, which is not currently in being. He proposed establishing that committee to interface with the museum and determine what to do with these and any other unwanted "Duston" artifacts. Historian Richardson (New Hampshire), Assistant Historian Thomas Spitalere (Haverhill), members Harry Gray (Maine), and David Kent (Massachusetts) volunteered to serve on this committee. Accordingly, the Secretary agreed to transfer the boxes to Tom who will convene the committee.

8. Archival Records Management. Treasurer Peter Dustin recommended we start thinking about how we store our association archives, many of which are in the possession of the President *Emeritus*. From experience with a similar historical organization, member Melvyn Douglass suggested scanning written artifacts and records so they could be viewed on-line by interested members. How to do that, in terms of labor and technical resources, was left unclear.

## NEW BUSINESS

9. The Hannah Duston Statues. The Secretary reported incidents of red paint vandalism which took place in May 2020 at Hannah's 1874 statue in Boscawen, NH, and shortly thereafter at her 1879 statue in Grand Army Of the Republic (GAR) Park, Haverhill. In both cases, the vandalism appears to have sparked a tide of controversy over the statues, with well-publicized calls<sup>1</sup> by indigenous and other representatives to do something about them. Neither statue was erected by the family, or is under the control or custody of the DDFA.

In Boscawen, a proposal by Abenaki representatives resulted in the state of New Hampshire's creation of an advisory committee to consider expanding the state-controlled Hannah monument area with exhibits and landscape improvements to tell a more balanced story about the island's natural and cultural significance for the Abenaki people, and their involvement in the Hannah Duston history.<sup>2</sup>

In Haverhill, Hannah's prominent statue was defaced with paint and graffiti accusing her of "genocide." Protestors appeared before the City Council demanding removal of her statue from GAR Park. Councilor Michael McGonigal told the meeting that he was sensitive to Native Americans who might find the statue offensive, but he saw the city's Hannah Duston monument as a symbol of "perseverance and survival." The proposal was defeated, but the council created a joint committee with members of the Haverhill Historic Commission and Natural Resources & Public Property Committee to consider the issue and recommend action.

Secretary David Dustin observed that DDFA members are constitutionally obligated to counter any popular perception or malicious argument that our ancestor's escape from bondage was an act of "genocide." He said we need to continue to act in ways that communicate to local and state governments that our family association exists to ensure that Hannah Duston's modest chapter in history is neither forgotten nor rewritten to make her out to be other than an extremely brave colonial mother forced to witness the execution of her infant and other captives while being marched into bondage.

To that end, President John Dustin had contacted the director of the New Hampshire Bureau of Historic Sites offering our support in planning any changes at the Boscawen monument. The President was assured the State would welcome DDFA participation in the conversation about how to expand the message of the Boscawen monument and would clean the statue. The President noted the differing nature of the current controversy at each of the Hannah statues. Regarding Boscawen, the sentiment appears to be for including an Abenaki historical perspective in the monument and the Hannah Duston event. In Haverhill, site of the large March 1697

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<sup>1</sup> Public radio talk shows, followed by prominent press articles in Concord, NH, and Haverhill and Lawrence, MA.

<sup>2</sup> Chaired by Andrew Cushing, the state director of the Bureau of Historic Sites, the first advisory committee meeting would be held in November 2020. Members include several state parks and monuments officials, the Chief Speaker and Head Female Speaker of the Cowasuck Band of Abenaki, professors from UNH, Williams College, and the University of Northern Iowa, municipal and historical society representatives from the town of Boscawen, the Merrimack County Friends of the Northern Rail Trail, and the DDFA's Craig Richardson and David A. Dustin.

Abenaki raid which claimed the lives of 27 townspeople and saw 13 others (including Hannah and her infant Martha) abducted, there is a demand to remove the statue from the GAR Park. The President said he regarded the current Abenaki proposal for the Boscawen monument as a positive change from their position a decade ago.

Diane Dustin Itasaka, president of the DDGHA, said visitors to Haverhill are often surprised to learn that the family, not the city, owns the 1697 Duston Garrison House and therefore think, incorrectly, that the family owns the GAR Park statue. She said that some people dislike the “gruesome” image of Hannah holding a hatchet; if the statue were not in bronze, perhaps it would have been destroyed by now. She recommended the family work to educate the public to understand that Hannah did not commit genocide.

10. DDFA Policy Regarding Hannah Duston Statues. Attendees, including Craig Richardson and member David Kent, noted that the time the two statues were erected was particularly fraught with rancor and fighting between white settlers and indigenous tribes in the Great Plains and the West. Kent said racial prejudice against Native Americans was extreme during this period of American westward expansion, which did see a lot of genocide, and it seems as though some people are equating Hannah Duston’s legacy to that, which is not true to her actual history. He said the harsh reference to “savages” inscribed on the pediment of the Haverhill statue reflects language of that time period unacceptable by today’s standards. Member Harry Gray noted a similar problem with the archaic reference to “faggot” (once: sticks to be burned) on the Boscawen monument. Vice President David Jellison suggested it might be possible to amend the inscriptions with updated plaques on the monuments. Treasurer Peter Dustin urged not obliterating the original language on the statues, but adding historical context.

11. It was suggested we should take this subject into an executive session. The Secretary responded that this was the DDFA Annual Meeting, the subject is critical to Hannah’s legacy, and we must deal with it openly, providing opportunity for our members to comment and give us their sense of how we should proceed. Member Beth Dustin said she believed it is very important that this subject be discussed by the family, adding her belief that it is time to “bring Hannah into the 21st Century.”

12. David Kent said that unless we can arrive at a reconciliation method that is inclusive both to the DDFA and the communities opposed to Hannah, we will continue to face animosity and further attacks on Hannah’s monuments. He said Native Americans have a perspective too, and we need to be able to understand them if we are to achieve some commonality on these historic events.

13. Craig Richardson advocated forming a smaller group to represent the DDFA in discussions that are happening with outside groups. And then we can work on crafting a statement. Peter Dustin said we need to emphasize several key things: these statues were not created by the family but by others, and our viewpoint is that our ancestor was a person who survived horrific events.

14. Member Jennifer Pevear inquired whether there could be a conversation with the Abenaki which might reach agreement on how they would like to portray this event in the future to the public. She said that would be a good starting place, rather than having all of Boscawen and Haverhill involved. Member Dan Dustin said that “the people you’re talking about are not easy to talk to.” He suggested having another block of granite, hard to destroy, located beside the statue that says we are the Duston-Dustin family, please log on to a specified website and learn our side of what happened to our ancestor. Craig Richardson said it is not clear that some of the people we’ll be talking to really can speak for all Abenaki. He said some of the people who have been agitating against Hannah’s statues don’t necessarily speak for all the indigenous community.

15. The Secretary said in his view the DDFA is far behind in its response to the statues controversy. It had been a controversy since the early part of July but we have not done anything about it. The Secretary said Abenaki representatives had done an admirable job of capturing the eye of the public through the media, but we need now to quickly ensure that the DDFA is a part of this discussion at the State and local government level. This annual meeting is our first opportunity to talk about how the family should proceed.

16. Member Deodonné Dustin Bhatteari, of Concord NH, said that she and her siblings had submitted a letter to the Concord (NH) Monitor supporting proposed equitable change to the Boscawen monument site to include an Abenaki perspective on colonial period events. Craig Richardson said he had heard it read on NHPR and thought it was well-received. He shared Deodonné’s letter on his Zoom screen and asked if anyone in the meeting disagreed with its sentiments. He said it would be a good thing to have on record from the family. Deodonné urged taking some of the sentiments from her letter and creating a policy statement that’s appropriate for the DDFA to share when we’re questioned. She said doing this would also allow the DDFA to get out in front, setting a tone that does not fall into “us versus them,” but proceeds with more of a restorative justice model of moving forward together.

After further discussion, it was moved, seconded, and passed that a committee be formed to draft a DDFA policy statement supporting restorative justice and expansion of the Hannah Duston monuments as appropriate to reflect an equitable perspective on the colonial events, including the Abenaki point of view. The chair would be Deodonné Dustin Bhatteari, and members would include volunteers Peggy McCatty, Craig Richardson, Tom Spitalere, Harry Gray, and Mark Dustan.

17. Executive Committee Nominations & Elections. The Secretary pointed out that our President John Dustin had expressed a desire to retire after years of service to the family, and other DDFA officers were starting to get long in the tooth: he invited the membership to consider standing for election. He said that with the advent of Zoom virtual meetings, likely to continue for some time given health concerns, a residence location away from Haverhill should no longer be considered a disadvantage.

The President then requested nominations for Executive Committee offices for 2021. There being none, he nominated the slate of existing officers who were re-elected by unanimous vote: *John Dustin, President, David Jellison, Vice President, Peter Dustin, Treasurer, Craig Richardson, Historian, David Dustin, Secretary*. The President solicited floor nominations for the open Executive Committee positions: Assistant Secretary and Assistant Historian. There being none, Thomas Spitalere, an officer in the DDGHA and curator in the Haverhill Historical Society, accepted an Executive Committee nomination for the vacant post of Assistant Historian and was elected.

18. Attendance. The President asked for shows of hands and this year’s virtual annual meeting attendance profile looked like this:

Massachusetts	8
New Hampshire	4
New York	2
Canada (N.B.)	1
Canada (Quebec)	1
Washington	2
Colorado	1
Georgia	1
Oregon	1
Pennsylvania	1
Michigan	1
Ohio	1
Maine	1
Texas	1
Utah	1
Virginia	2
Total	29

19. Program. The Secretary announced that we had just encountered a snag with our program speaker, author Jay Atkinson, whose well-researched 2015 account of the Hannah Duston story, *Massacre On the Merrimack*, is highly acclaimed. Mr. Atkinson’s presence was prevented by a family emergency and the Secretary was working with him to reschedule his Zoom talk at a later date to be announced via email.

20. The meeting was adjourned by the President at 2 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*David A. Dustin, Secretary*

February 3, 2021