



Tower Family Crest

The Coat of Arms is a shield with three castle towers, a chevron with three roses, a knight's helmet above the shield and a Mason's square and compass above the helmet.

Tower Talk Newsletter



**By the
Tower Genealogical Society
Chartered in 1909**

Picture of the 'Mary Ann,' which sailed from Ipswich, England, in May and arrived at Boston, Massachusetts, on June 20, 1637, bringing John Tower to the United States.

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The Old Ship Church: A Meeting House for Early Towers

The First Church in Hingham was gathered in 1635, its congregation largely drawn from the Parish Church in Hingham, England. Peter Hobart was the first minister and the Towers would have occupied some of its earliest pews. It is the oldest Meeting House in continuous ecclesiastical use in the United States and is a National Historic Landmark. Many renovations were carried out over the centuries, and additions were made, principally in the 1700s.



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CALENDAR REMINDERS

- 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN TOWER
(May 17th, 1609-2009)
- 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHARTERING OF THE TOWER FAMILY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
(1909-2009)

Hingham Memorial Bell Tower

Next to the Old Ship Church, or Meeting House, is the Hingham Memorial Bell Tower. It was dedicated in 1912 "...To The Settlers of Hingham," with great fanfare, including the ringing of the bells and the tooting of the "relatively new" automobile horns. The 75-foot-high brick tower was built to commemorate the 275th anniversary of the settlement of Hingham. It was designed after the shape of the square tower of St. Andrew's Church in Hingham, England. It holds one of only 20 sets of change-ringing bells in North America. While most bells play hymns, songs, or melodies, change-ringing bells produce no recognizable tunes.

(Picture on Page 3, story continued on Page 4)

President's Message

By David C. Tower

The genealogy side of the society has been more active than ever. I have probably spent an average of five hours a day keeping up with it or, more factually, I have been spending five hours a day and not keeping up with it. That's not a complaint because I really enjoy corresponding with all my cousins....just never realized I had so many.

This issue is all about places in Hingham that have played an important role in the lives of our ancestors and thus will be among the many places we will want to visit during our reunion in 2009.* Hopefully we'll begin to generate some enthusiasm and maybe even get a couple of volunteers to help out. I'm looking forward to meeting a lot of nice people that I know of, but have yet to meet. Wouldn't it be great if we could get over a hundred people to attend our 100th.

See y'all there, hey!

David C. Tower
President

* An announcement will be made in the next Newsletter of the exact time and place of the 2009 National Tower Reunion. Three of the Board members (Carol Marchegiani, John Tower, and Roxanne Summers) spent two days in Hingham MA in mid-September, scouting out specific places and activities of potential interest to Reunion attendees. Once the full Board has considered their recommendations, the Reunion decisions will be featured in subsequent Newsletters.

NEW MEMBERS:

TGS welcomes two new members: Patricia Ann (Cummings) Brown, of Grover Beach, CA. Her lineage is: Patricia Cummings (11), Garland Tower (10), Clifton (9), Schuyler (8), Alvin (7), Martin (6), Thomas Gross (5), Shadrach (4), Thomas (3), Benjamin (2) and John (1).

Susan (Spain) Conklin, of Grand Rapids MI. Susan's lineage is: Susan Spain (11), Lewis Tower (10), Samuel (9), Isaac (8), Samuel (7), Isaac (6), Isaac (5), Daniel (4), Daniel (3), Ibrook (2), and John (1).

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Tori Rose Dix, daughter of Jolene Tobey and Marshall Dix, born July 20, 1007. Tori's grandmother is Cathy (Betit) Tobey and her great-grandmother is Leona (Tower) Jones.

Kelsey Lynn Thayer, born August 2, 2007. Kelsey is the daughter of Melinda Thayer, who is the daughter of Craig and Johanne Thayer and great-granddaughter of Priscilla Thayer.

The Old Ship Church: A Meeting House for Early Towers

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One of the most interesting parts of the Church are its pews—benches encased by wooden boxes that separate the families into small sections. These boxes, which were luxurious replacements for the original rough benches, were built gradually over time, beginning in 1755. In 1869, shortly after the completion of the final pew, they were all torn out and replaced with curved and cushioned benches, to complement the Victorian renovations of the rest of the church. Fortunately, some of the families saved their old pews. In 1930, through the generosity of Eben Gay, a descendant of the best known minister, Ebenezer Gay, the Old Ship was restored to a less ornate style. The old pews were returned to their rightful place and served as models for new pews to replace those that had been destroyed. Many of the Meeting House furnishings are very old and have long been in use. The Christening Bowl was made before 1600 and probably came over with the first Hingham parishioners.

The choir, seated upstairs in the rear of the church, dates from 1755, when Dr. Gay was asked to appoint a group of able singers to lead in the singing. In 1807, a bass viol was added, and then, a flute and a tenor viol. The custom of facing the rear of the church for the final hymn was adopted in 1855, when the congregation asked to join in the singing and turned to face the choir leader in the rear gallery.

Church services are not held in the summer, as many members of the congregation leave on vacation.

(Text from the Bulletin of the Old Ship Church and other sources.)

The Hingham Cemetery

It was customary in England to bury the members of the church behind the Meeting House. This land originally belonged to Thomas Gill and was not acquired by the church until 1838, despite all the burials there. Although most of the Tower ancestors are buried in the High Street Cemetery, several Towers are buried behind the church. They are:

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Tower Alice H. | 1889/04/04 | 1956/10/02 |
| Tower George A. | 1882/12/15 | Mr. 1954/10/16 |
| Tower Laura Tilden | 1859/00/00 | Mrs. 1939/04/09 |
| Tower Moore | 1958/07/10 | Baby 1958/07/14 |
| Tower Sarah C. | 1840/00/00 | 1886/00/00 |
| Tower William A. | 1855/07/16 | Mr. 1900/02/19 |

Other Tower ancestors who do not carry the Tower name are buried here, and the graves of a great many of the first Hingham families are also here. Among those early families related to Tower descendants: Hobart, Gay, Thaxter, Hersey, Bates, Lincoln, and Wilder.

The cemetery is modeled on the concept of a garden, with walks, roadways, plants, and trees.

(A more complete description of the Hingham cemetery is found at <http://hinghamcemetery.org>.)



Hingham Cemetery, where burials date from at least 1672 and include members of the Tower family, as well as many other founding families of Hingham.



Old Ship Church: A view of the choir loft in the upper gallery and the unique boxed pews that were saved and returned to the church during its renovation almost 70 years later!



The Hingham Memorial Bell Tower: See story on Pages 1 and 4.

The
Hingham Historical Society
 is on the Web at
www.HINGHAMHISTORICAL.org

Hingham Memorial Bell Tower

(continued from Page 1)

Yet the bells are rung in sequences as disciplined and orderly as the stones and timbers of the towers themselves, producing a rich cascade of sound.

Change ringing requires special bells, predetermined sequences of notes, and ringers who must climb the towers to ring the bells. Change ringing is not like playing a carillon or a chime, and it cannot be done by a single person sitting at a keyboard or a computer.

Change ringing depends on real bells, each swung in a complete circle by a single person, usually standing in a circle. Bells for change ringing are hung in stout frames that allow the bells to swing through 360 degrees. Each bell is attached to a wooden wheel with a handmade rope running around it. The mechanism achieves such exquisite balance that ten-year-olds and octogenarians can control the largest bell easily. The harmonic richness of a swinging bell cannot be matched by the same bell hanging stationary, but each swinging bell requires one ringer's full attention.

The bells are arranged in the frame so their ropes hang in a circle in the ringing chamber below. Into each rope is woven a tuft of brightly colored wool (sally), which marks where the ringer must catch the rope while ringing. Bells are rung from the "mouth up" position. With a pull of the rope, the bell swings through a full circle to the "up" position again. With the next pull it swings back in the other direction.

Below is a picture of bell ringers. To find out more information, and to hear change ringing bells, go to <http://www.nagcr.org/pamphlet.html>.



Note from your Editor

ROXANNE SUMMERS

We are beginning the planning phase of our national Tower reunion in 2009. We would especially appreciate the assistance of our members in informing other Tower families of the reunion. We would also be grateful for any volunteers to help in the planning and/or assistance at the reunion.

As always, we are pleased to have your suggestions and contributions for future Newsletters. Quick comments or questions for our other readers are just as welcome as longer articles. If you are worried about editing, leave it to me. You can find me at the address below.

Please remember to let me know about any reunions scheduled for the coming year!

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TGS BOOKS

TGS Volume III genealogy books may be purchased by sending \$60.00, payable to: TOWER GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY, to Roxanne Summers, 46200 Sylvan Court, Lexington Park MD 20653.

TGS Cookbooks may be purchased by sending \$8.50, payable to: TOWER GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY, to Georgena Miller, 977 E. Glass Road, Ortonville, MI 48462.