



President's message presented at the Member's Annual Business Meeting
Wednesday September 27, 2023.

David P. McKenna

A Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Fiscal Year to all our devoted members and supporters who make all this possible.

I wonder what the founders of the Danvers Historical Society in 1889 would think if they could see into the future at the many incredible accomplishments their brainchild has accomplished and the many obstacles we have confronted and overcome to fulfill their vision of preserving the History of Danvers for future generations to study and enjoy.

We have just completed a year of significant progress on MANY fronts, after a couple of years of Covid shutdowns obliterating our income stream as all weddings had to be cancelled, like the Phoenix rising from the ashes, we have come roaring back, resulting in one of our best years ever.

I would like to thank our incredibly dedicated Staff: Heather, Laura, Matt, and our newest addition Kate and all their assistants for the care and attention they give to the society's goals, all our Volunteers, Members, Trustees and donors, whose generous contributions, of time or funding helps the Society achieve its many goals.

Some of our accomplishments this year include:

Replacing the roof and third floor windows on the Page house, which received a professional paint job in the summer, returning it to its former glory. We think Anne Page would be proud, especially with the new plaque out front honoring her commitment to the Suffragist movement;

The conservatory windows are now out being restored, paid by grants and matching donations;

A restoration of Mrs. Day's 10-footer shoe shop. What started out as a need for a new roof snowballed into a major restoration, when we discovered that the less visible rear wall had been compromised by water leaks and more damned squirrels. Aspen roofing volunteered the labor to re-shingle the roof, and a shout out to Rowley Restoration for their expertise on both these projects (please remember them both if you need work done);

This spring, we had to replace our toilet trailer and have installed a "dump station" on our existing sewer line, which will pay for itself the first year, by eliminating pump out fees;

We installed a pop-up sprinkler system for the Lawns at Glen Magna, thanks in part by another very generous donation by the Kowalski family, so our "botanical Artist" Matthew Martin can spend his time on keeping the gardens beautiful, instead of wasting time dragging hoses around;

And OF COURSE, just as we started the installation, the pump in our irrigation well quit and needed replacement, which is done;

Roof on the veranda and wings of the Mansion at Glen Magna have been replaced;

Have been awarded a \$48,000 grant from MHC to replace the milkmaid and Reaper statues to the roof of the Derby Summer House aka McIntyre Tea House and complete most of the interior restoration; (if you haven't been by lately, stop by early morning or late afternoon on a clear day and enjoy the beauty of the Reaper and Milkmaid, stark white against an azure sky;

Received a \$2000 grant from Cummings Employee Directed Giving Program;

Received \$47,000 in April 23 from Mass Cultural Council, in support of our programming, including staff and facilities at Page Street;

Submitted a letter of inquiry for the Preservation Massachusetts/1772 Foundation submitted, by Suanna, for a matching grant of \$6,250 to fund a \$12,500 repair of Page House Conservatory; and were awarded the funding

Received and have applied for other small grants.

Finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel for the land swap that was shelved since 1984. All legal hurdles have been crossed and we passed papers just this morning, so WE own our parking lot, and the Town owns their activity field. Thank you from the bottom of my heart to Tom Guidi for his tireless attention to details and persistence in getting all the involved parties to do what was necessary to bring this 40 plus year saga to a close.

And yet we still have a long way to go. We're still facing limitations on our use of the mansion at Glen Magna, due to a need to bring it fully up to code, so we can allow gatherings there again. The Mass Access Board in Boston denied our request to waive the \$225,000.00 Elevator, even though Mass Historical SAID they didn't approve of it, but they wouldn't put it in writing. So NOW we need to apply to Mass Historical to get their permission to build the elevator, they didn't want. We still need to build a handicapped restroom, which is scheduled to be done over the winter, so that handicapped wedding guests won't have to use a portable toilet. And MAY be required to put sprinklers inside the mansion, plus other minor code issues that could end up costing \$500,000, that we don't have.

And we had to deal with some code issues with our catering setup for our weddings. The Town inspectors paid a surprise visit last fall, noting several safety, fire and health code issues with the setup we had been using for years, and while the former Building Inspector was ready to shut us down on the spot, the Fire Inspector said no we will NOT shut down the weddings, because he knew that if they did, the brides' mothers would find them, even if they change their names and left the country. Then they suggested a few minor modifications to get us through the last few weddings of 2022, then worked cooperatively with us to resolve the issues, so we could open this past spring with a safe environment for the mansion, guests and staff. Their cooperation and willingness to help made me proud to say I live in Danvers. Vinwood, our caterer, made a significant investment in a cooking trailer, to meet fire codes that prevented cooking under a tent so close to the mansion.

All this progress has been possible because to the dedication and hard work of our staff: Laura, Heather, Matthew, Christian and their part time assistants and volunteers, our Motivated Trustees, and all our generous donors, and members.

Due to your support, we raised over \$92,000 from Ellie's Challenge, making many of these, hopes, dreams and aspirations a reality.

But we have so much more to accomplish. The business plan developed by Tom Page, George Saluto, and Bob Young put us on a sound financial footing to cover our day-to-day operating expenses, but not the extraordinary preservation costs we face. It could cost up to \$750,000 to bring the mansion up to code, IF we can't get the elevator, and sprinklers waived.

Please join with me and open your hearts and your checkbooks and help us preserve the incredible History of Danvers and Salem Village, so that our grandchildren can continue to enjoy and learn from the lives and stories of the paths their Great-great grandparents chose, that brought us here.

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