New Acquisitions
By Melanie Correia, Museum Collections Manager

We are thrilled to announce some of our newest acquisitions this spring, two oil paintings that are unique to our collection. In an effort to expand our permanent collection to encompass more female artists and 20th century material, the DRHS has purchased these new paintings by two artists with substantial ties to Duxbury’s art culture of the 20th century.

Marjorie Conant Bush-Brown (1885-1978) studied at the Museum of Fine Arts School in Boston under Frank Benson, Edward Tarbell and Philip Haas. She later studied in Paris under Lucien Simon and Charles Cottet. She was a member of the National Association of Women Artists (NAWA) and a charter member of the Duxbury Art Association. She exhibited widely during her lifetime, including in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington DC and Atlanta. She attained a certain level of recognition with Georgia Youth, a painting of a young black man first shown at the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1940. She also exhibited at the Duxbury Art Association’s first show in 1917, and was instrumental in establishing the Helen Bumpus Gallery, where she twice exhibited her works, and served on its Board of Directors until her passing. She married Harold Bush-Brown in 1924 and lived in Georgia while her husband was the Head of School of Architecture at the Georgia Institute of Technology. After his retirement in 1957, the Bush-Browns moved permanently to Duxbury where they owned a house on St. George Street.

Gertrude Ann Youse (1927-1994), more commonly known as Gay Youse, was a painter, teacher, and gallery director. She spent most of her life making art prevalent and important to the Duxbury community, moving to town from Boston in the 1950s, where she had attended school at the Museum of Fine Arts. Youse was influenced by Austrian expressionist Oskar Kokoschka who gave a talk at her school and was exhibited at the MFA. Youse painted portraits and still-lifes but was mainly known for landscapes.

From 1958 to 1968 Youse taught classes at the Duxbury Art Association to all ages. She continued to teach out of her studio on Church Street but Gay’s attention was drawn to the Helen Bumpus Gallery in 1968 where she became the gallery director for 20 years. She exhibited artists like Alice Neel, Harold Tovish, Mariana Pineda, Louis Tarlow, Jack Wolfe, Penelope Lencks, David Aronson, and Karl Zerbe. To interest students locally, Youse organized exhibitions in the gallery. Many of her students went on to become artists in their own right or art educators. Duxbury High School created a perpetual scholarship, the Gay Youse Art Scholarship, in her name for their graduates.

**LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

One of the perks of this position is my view out the office window of Duxbury Harbor across the parking lot. And while as I write this the weather does not always contribute to the feeling of spring as around the corner, the increase in the waterfront activity over the last few weeks has been tremendous. The other day I saw the launch of the season’s first recreational boat, so it must be close indeed.

The arrival of spring will also see the commencement of our outdoor and museum seasons, with many activities, events and tours planned for all ages and interests, some of which are highlighted in this newsletter with further information and signup options available on our website. We are excited to see our museums fully open again, with the Bradford House celebrating its “Grand Reopening Party” on June 23.

In the meantime, the work of the staff, Board of Trustees and the search committee for a permanent Executive Director continues apace, and combine to keep the DRHS on course and in excellent shape. The Society is fortunate to enjoy strong support from its members, friends and sponsors, support which allows us the opportunity to engage in long range planning, secure in the knowledge that we will be able to execute on our plans and goals.

We look forward to seeing many of you at our events and properties over the course of these warmer months!

Jim Hartford
Interim Executive Director

**KING CAESAR HOUSE FENCE RESTORATION**

This spring we have embarked on another chapter in the life of the iconic front fence at the King Caesar House. We understand the fence to have been built either at the time of the construction of the King Caesar House in 1809, or perhaps shortly thereafter. Over the course of these 200 plus years it has seen many repairs and restorations, some more faithful to the original construction than others. We have one drawing of the fence, done by Alden Bradford in the nineteenth century as part of his larger survey of the property.

Leading the project is Lee McColgan, who primarily practices traditional woodworking, both carpentry and joinery. He builds reproduction furniture and works in the preservation industry. Lee is the founder of Hebe LLC, a historic trades company focused on the building arts. We anticipate completion of this restoration project sometime in June of 2022.
When Duxbury’s iconic Nathaniel Ford and Son store opened on Tremont Street in 1826, it was only one of many neighborhood “general” stores catering to a local clientele. Although the Ford Store would go on to be hailed as the country’s first department store, selling a wide variety of goods in its ramshackle and rambling buildings, it was never the only place to shop in town. The Ford family’s fame overshadowed the dozens of other Duxbury proprietors who served the community throughout the nineteenth century.

Before the advent of the automobile, Duxbury was a town of self-sufficient villages where most daily tasks were accomplished within the confines of your neighbor. Whether you lived in the charmingly named Tarkiln, Ashdod, Crooked Lane, or Tinkertown; the eponymously named Fordville, Chandlerville, or Gardnerville; or the practically named South Duxbury, you likely had a school, shops, and crafts men within walking distance. That was very important when you made frequent forays on foot. When it came to shopping local in 1826, the year the Fords hung out their sign, there were at least four other general stores on the east side of Duxbury, each selling similar wares to their local patrons. Judah Allen’s was on the corner of Tremont and Alden Streets, creating the hazardous bend in the road that we still live with today. Ezra “King Caesar” Weston had a store on St. George Street, directly across from the Wright Building. William and Henry Sampson opened a shop on Washington Street, and Sylvanus Sampson’s store on Standish Street was going strong. There were, I am sure, instances when our 19th century counterparts chose to trek longer distances to get better eggs, a more stylish bonnet, or cheaper spices, but for the most part, basic necessities could be had close to your front door.

Some items did require specialty shops or planned excursions. Fine thread for crewelwork and lovely embroidered ribbons were sold out of the front parlor of Matilda Peterson’s house on Surpas Street, for example. A trip to her shop was a treat fondly recalled by many Duxbury young women. When even Matilda’s offerings did not suit, there was always Boston. The latest books, French Wallpapers, fine silks, fancy carpets, etc., could all be had in the city’s many mercantile establishments. The daily packet could sail you to Boston and ship your purchases home to Duxbury. The stage could also take you, or you could place an order with the stage driver who would pick up what you needed. After 1845, you could also catch a train to the city from Kingston.

While many of the goods sold in 19th-century stores were locally sourced or imported from Europe and Asia, some of the staples were products of Southern and Caribbean slavery. The Fords’ first sale included four gallons of molasses, fourteen pounds of sugar, one gallon of New England Rum, and ½ pound of tobacco. The molasses, sugar, and tobacco were all directly produced by enslaved people. The New England rum was distilled using sugar from the West Indies. While cotton cloth or thread was not part of this first sale, it was likely sold later in the day. This complexity between the Northern and Southern economies did go unnoticed. When the anti-slavery movement grew in the North, forcing such items was one way to show support for the cause. But, even staunch abolitionists like the Bradford family of our Bradford House Museum continued to purchase sugar, cotton and molasses in the years preceding the Civil War, showing support for the cause.

Throughout the 1800s stores would come and go, thrive and fail. Some owners would pack up and head west, hoping for better luck in a new boom town, some would change occupations altogether. Federal era homes would become stores, only to be eventually converted back to residences once again. The history of Duxbury’s many stores is often as interesting as that of our grand shipbuilding wharfs. To learn more about Duxbury stores and the goods they carried, we invite you to visit the Bradford House Museum this summer to view our special exhibition, Shopping Local: Duxbury Stores in the 1800s.