

Conservation Commission," he said. Condominium unit prices may range between \$90,000 and

DRIVE FOR VOLUNTEERS: Margaret Jones (left), a volunteer for Our Daily Bread, a soup kitchen at the St. Thomas Episcopal Church, talks about the benefits of working for the organization to

Barbara Baskas and Amy Cabral, both Morton Hospital employees, who attended the Volunteer Service Bureau Fair at Morton yesterday. (Mike Gay Photo)

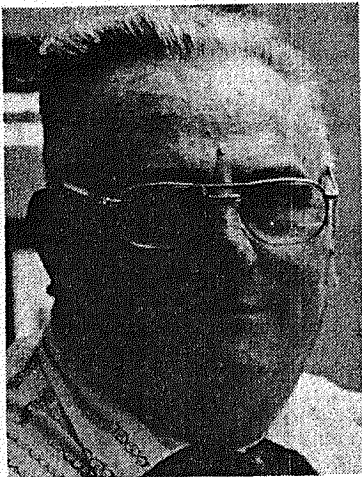
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City preserves its history

• Shays' Rebellion remembered • Historical Society plans drive

By KAREN CUBIE
Gazette Staff Writer

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DR. JORDAN FIORE
History very close

Two hundred years ago on the evening of Oct. 22, 1786, David Cobb donned his Revolutionary War general's uniform, grabbed his sword off the wall, and marched across Taunton Green to the steps of the Bristol County Superior Courthouse.

Gen. Cobb, who had been elected to the post of Major General of the 5th Massachusetts Militia, the chief civil and military person in Bristol County, had been warned to expect trouble.

A few days later, on Oct. 25, 1786, Shays' Rebellion had ended in Southeastern Massachusetts when Cobb and a unit of 400 militiamen and volunteers faced down a mob led by Col. David Valentine of Freetown determined to close the Taunton Court until grievances of debtors had been satisfied.

Taunton will commemorate the 200th anniversary of this event Sunday with a 3 p.m. ceremony on the lawn of the Bristol County Superior Courthouse. Taunton Historical Commission Chairman Dr. Jordan D. Fiore will preside over the ceremony.

Old Colony Historical Society Secretary Dr. William F. Hanna 3d will talk about the historical background for Shays' Rebellion, and Edward F. Kennedy, headmaster emeritus of Taunton High School and author of a pamphlet about David Cobb published by the Old Colony Historical Society, will present the main speech.

By early spring of 1786, Massachusetts had fallen into a severe economic depression which struck the farming community the hardest, forcing many farmers to sell their property at a fraction of its value in order to pay bills and taxes. According to Kennedy, the words "debtor" and "farmer" had become almost synonymous.

A rebellion was being held throughout the Western part of the state, led by Revolutionary War veteran Captain Daniel Shays of Pelham, protesting against the Massachusetts General Court which had adjourned without acting on petitions to issue more paper money, or without passing

laws to stop the foreclosure of farms and homes.

A convention condemning the Massachusetts Senate, lawyers, the high cost of legal action, and the tax system had been held in Hatfield in August of 1786, and courts in Northampton, Worcester, Concord, and Great Barrington had been prohibited from sitting.

Cobb had learned a mob of Bristol County men planned to try the same thing in Taunton.

According to Taunton legend, when Cobb saw the crowd begin to gather outside the Superior Courthouse he ran back to his house and said to his wife, "Mother, bring out my old regiments. Damme, I'll sit as a judge or die as a general."

Fiore isn't sure if that's exactly what Cobb said.

"But if it isn't, it's pretty close," he said. "Knowing Cobb, he had a pretty foul mouth, and what he actually said may have been unprintable."

The Sunday night before the court session was to open, Cobb occupied the courthouse with some volunteers, and on Monday and Tuesday he called out more troops.

On the morning of Oct. 25, a Wednesday, 375 militia lined up in front of the courthouse with their muskets ready.

General Cobb stood in front of the men with his sword drawn and waited for the rebels to appear.

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The Old Colony Historical Society announced its plans to raise \$250,000 through a 1987 Capital Fund Drive in a business meeting held in Taunton's Historical Hall yesterday afternoon.

The fund drive will be held over a period of three years, and the money raised will be used to cover administration expenses, maintenance costs, museum upkeep, and library costs.

"The (Historical) Hall is 134 years old," Capital Fund Drive Committee Co-chairman Emma R. Andrade told Old Colony Historical Society members during the meeting. "We've never had a fund drive in all that time, and the time has come. If we wish to keep the building together, we need funds to operate."

The Historical Society also needs funds to continue sponsoring lectures, walking tours, and other services to the community, Mrs. Andrade said.

Other Historical Society board members on the committee are Honorary Chairman Dr. Jordan D. Fiore; Co-chairman Herbert M. Borden; David B. Dean, treasurer;

Estella R. Margarido, financial secretary; Dr. David F. Gouveia, corporate gifts; Margery L. Largey, general gifts; and Dr. William F. Hanna 3d, special gifts.

Before the close of the meeting a Sturbridge Village musician James Douglas entertained society members with a look at early American life through its music.

Douglas performed songs dealing with the battles of the sexes, poor singing ability, romantic love, and bundling — an early American courting tradition allowing young men and women to climb into bed together, fully dressed, and separated by a board.

He also performed songs dug out of diaries and journals in the possession of the Old Colony Historical Society.

In an effort to communicate fund drive information to all society members, an identical business meeting and program was also held last night.

Capital Fund Drive information was presented by Borden at that meeting.

What, no Yule tree? City desperately seeking spruce

"Oh, Christmas Tree; Oh, Christmas ... Where are you?"

Okay, that is not exactly how the words go to the carol, but they make a great deal of sense in Taunton today.

Preparations for the annual decorating of the historic Tanton Green are underway and just about everything is on schedule for the Dec. 5 lighting ceremony.

Except for the tree.

Taunton officials, including Mayor Richard Johnson and Ronald F. Arieta, the director of park and recreation, are scrambling to find a suitable full spruce, at least 50 to 60 feet tall to use for the city's annual holiday arrangement.

There was talk at a meeting this morning about possibly having to use a gingerbread house in the middle of the Green with a number of small trees around it to create a "forest effect" in lieu of the tree.

City officials had their eyes set on what Mayor Johnson called "perfect tree", situated in a yard behind City Hall. It doesn't appear, however, the city will be able to lure the green spruce away from its current owner.

Anyone, who thinks he has a tree to fit the city's bill, is advised to contact the mayor's office or the park and recreation department.

Deadline, Christmas.

