



# FROM THE BELLTOWER

*The Newsletter of the Friends of the  
North Brookfield Town House*

September/October 2023 Vol 1 Issue 4



## Meet Nadia Sukharev – Town House Artist

Simply being a triplet with an identical sister and brother is enough to make a person stand out. But Nadia Sukharev is also a talented artist willing to put herself “out there” by contributing her creative ability to raise money for the restoration of the North Brookfield Town House. When asked why she spent a good part of the summer before her senior year at North Brookfield Junior/Senior High School painting a portrait of the iconic white building in the center of her town, Nadia answered that painting the Town House to be used as a Friends of the Town House Oktoberfest raffle prize was a challenge for her. It was a subject that she had not done previously, but she felt that it would be a good way to start introducing her art to the community. “I felt good about donating the painting because the proceeds will be going to a very good cause – the renovation of the North Brookfield Town House. I also liked the idea of someone outside of my family owning a piece of my art,” she added. “I view this as a wonderful development for me.”

About a year and a half ago, Nadia underwent neurosurgery and for several months was unable to attend school. Her recovery was challenging to say the least. Although she continues to have severe migraines, Nadia works hard to show up and do her best every day. She dedicates much of her time to creating art, a talent she has honed with little formal training. Art is her favorite subject and Nadia loves all forms including drawing, painting, sketching, print making, ceramics, and digital art.

After high school she would like to go to college and is also considering art school. Her hobbies include photography, thrifting, and traveling. She really likes cats and spends time enjoying her pets, especially her orange tabby named Fox. Nadia has completed her painting of the Town House and the raffle prize has been professionally framed. The winner of the Town House painting will be announced on Saturday, September 30th at the Oktoberfest at Common Ground Ciderworks. But it is not necessary to be present at the event from 11 am to 5 pm on the 30th to win. Raffle tickets are on sale now at the cost of one for \$5.00 and three for \$10.00. Individuals interested in



purchasing tickets in advance can email [friends@nbtownhouse.com](mailto:friends@nbtownhouse.com) with their contact information or call Maureen Caramiello at (508) 596-3582.

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## **Willkommen to Oktoberfest**

**Join us September 30<sup>th</sup> at Common Ground from 11am – 5pm.**



**Sing and Dance to the music of The  
Chipmunks German Band**

**Enjoy Delicious Food  
Shop Creative Local Vendors  
Take part in Games for All Ages  
And**

**Try Your Luck with these Exciting Raffles:**

A Misty Harbor Resort two-night off-season stay for up to six people  
Four Reserved Tickets for a Worcester Red Sox game in April or May 2024  
An Old Sturbridge Village Family Pass for four  
A Boy's Bicycle from Whitco Sales  
An Area Rug from Caron's House of Carpets  
A Rustic Wooden Bench crafted by Rick Lauder  
An Ecotarium Day Pass for two adults and two children  
Strandz Hair Salon \$50.00 gift certificate  
308 Lakeside \$50.00 gift card  
Hardwick Crossing \$25.00 gift card  
and  
Two \$25.00 gift cards from Hannaford's Supermarket

**Enjoy All We Have to Offer while Supporting the Restoration  
of the  
North Brookfield Town House**

## **This October We celebrate the 89<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of George M. Cohan's Performance of *Ah, Wilderness!* in Our Town House**

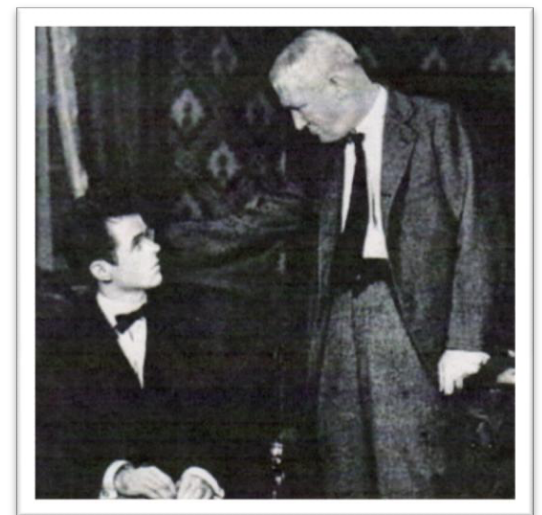
George M. Cohan (1878-1942) was an actor, producer, and playwright. He also wrote music. His song "Over There" was composed in 1917 and became the rallying cry of World War I.

Cohan, who is regarded as the father of modern American musical comedy, spent many summers in North Brookfield, living with his grandparents in a large two-story colonial style farmhouse on Bell Street. He later recalled those summers as "the only smattering of real boyhood in my whole life." According to Cohan's North Brookfield friend and fellow composer William Carey Duncan in the Official Program for Connie Mack Day, "From the moment that Jerry, Helen, Josie and George alighted from the little two-car train with its asthmatic old engine things began to happen. [George's] 'gang' was rapidly organized and went into action with breath-taking speed." Known as the Coughlin Disturbers, George was captain of this "kid" baseball team which Duncan called "a group of conscientious mischief-makers." As a case in point, Duncan tells "the story of George dancing a clog on the long dining table of a Coldbrook hotel, using a liberal sprinkling of salt in place of sand," with the result that the "entire team were obliged to run far faster than they ever ran the bases, the irate hotel proprietor in hot but unsuccessful pursuit." Meanwhile, according to Duncan, "Jerry and Helen were busy preparing their stage material for the coming season and rehearsing and perfecting their act." George did calm down eventually and during his last few summers in town he "took to writing on his own account and produced much of the material used by his father, mother, sister and himself on the stage." At the end of each summer, the Cohans would put together a farewell performance for the town on the Town House stage -- which the successful Mr. Cohan later improved by his gift of "a complete proscenium arch with a drop curtain and several sets of scenery".



There were times during these idyllic summer months that the family would perform to raise money for a specific local cause. An article in the North Brookfield Journal, on May 28, 1894, reported that the Cohans had given "a special show to benefit St. Joseph's Church and School Fund". They brought in some colleagues to help them perform two short musical comedies. Admission was 25 and 35 cents.

The playbill for Cohan's show *Fifty Miles from Boston*, revived by the Theatre Guild of North Brookfield in May of 2008, points out Cohan's close association with the North Brookfield Town House. Over the forty years that he and other members of his family spent time here, "many of his musicals and now famous songs were first performed on the stage of the Great Hall."



In October of 1934, George M., by now a veteran Broadway actor and director, came back to town to present a scaled-back performance of Eugene O'Neill's play *Ah, Wilderness!*. He played the part of the father

with the original New York cast. Covering Cohan's arrival in North Brookfield by train, the Associated Press noted that the play would take place on the same stage where he had made his debut as an actor forty-two years before. Five hundred thirty-two seats in the Town House were given out by lottery. Loudspeakers were set up outside to accommodate another 3,000 people who could not fit in the hall.

As a tribute to this local boy who had achieved so much fame and to his family, the Town House stage is now referred to as "The Cohan Stage." And each year North Brookfield kindergarteners are taught to sing *You're a Grand Old Flag*, one of Cohan's most famous songs.

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## **Are we doing enough to celebrate North Brookfield's connection to the Father of Broadway?**

George M. Cohan once told a reporter that there was no place like North Brookfield. Although he was born in Providence, he referred to North Brookfield as his hometown. As we move forward with the campaign to save, restore, and improve the Town House, should we be emphasizing our Cohan connection in order to increase support?

How about lobbying the town for a "North Brookfield-Summer Home of George M Cohan" sign and doing a George M concert and flag flying event every year?

Or having the Friends sponsor a baseball game between teams representing Connie Mack and George M?

What do you think? We would love to hear from you. If you have ideas for activities that would showcase this Cohan connection. and at the same time raise funds to support the restoration project, please reach out to us at [friends@nbtownhouse.com](mailto:friends@nbtownhouse.com). Send in your ideas. Input from the community is very important to potential funders.

**Let's be proud of the fact that our small New England town has a close connection with George M Cohan and embrace, enjoy and have some fun with it.**

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**celebrate Halloween by taking a spooky walk through the deep, dark night where you are sure to come across frightening characters doing scary things. Join the**

**North Brookfield Theatre Guild as they lead you on a**

*A Freak N Fright Train of Terror*

**at Common Ground Ciderworks October 27+28. The cost is a mere \$10.00 for adults and \$7.00 for 12 and under. The ghouls begin to gather at dusk - or around 5:30 pm. There will be music and free hot chocolate to calm your nerves.**

# Please Support Restoration

*Revitalization, Education, and Creativity in our Community*

To Join the Friends or make a donation, please use the form below or scan the QR code.



Name (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email address for newsletter \_\_\_\_\_

Individual [\$25] \_\_\_ Family [\$50] \_\_\_ Lifetime [\$200] \_\_\_ Business/Organization [\$200] \_\_\_ Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (s): \_\_\_\_\_

Cash \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Donation Included \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I want to get involved:      Fundraising \_\_\_                      Membership \_\_\_  
   Capital Campaign \_\_\_                      Programs/Classes \_\_\_  
   Special Events \_\_\_                      Outreach to the community and potential supporters \_\_\_

I have time:    weekly \_\_\_    monthly \_\_\_    one time/event \_\_\_

Please describe any special skills or talents you have:

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*The Friends of the North Brookfield Town House is a 501(c)(3) organization supported entirely by the generosity of our members and donors, and the success of annual fundraising events.*

**Friends of the North Brookfield Town House**  
P.O. Box 12 - North Brookfield, MA 01535 – [friends@nbtownhouse.com](mailto:friends@nbtownhouse.com)

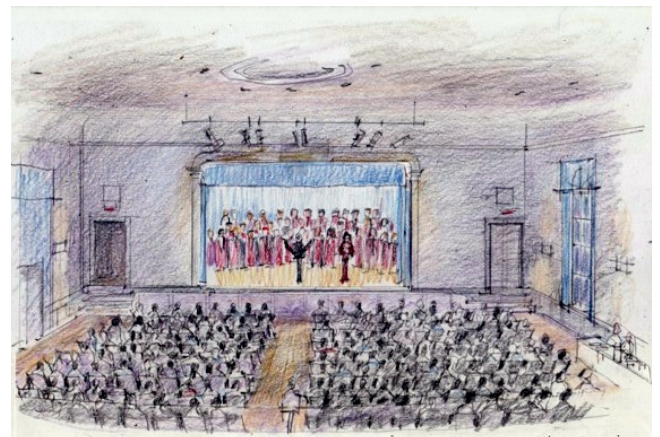
## HELP RESTORE THE TOWN HOUSE AND REVITALIZE NORTH BROOKFIELD WITH A TAX-FREE GIFT FROM YOUR IRA

If you are 70-1/2 or older, you can make a tax-free gift directly to the Friends of the North Brookfield Town House from your traditional or Roth IRA. It's a simple and smart way to enjoy tax savings while improving your community. Just instruct your plan administrator to send a specific dollar amount directly to the Friends of the North Brookfield Town House, at the address above. Be sure to include your name and address.



For questions, or more information, please email: [friends@nbtownhouse.com](mailto:friends@nbtownhouse.com).

*Please plan ahead so that your distribution arrives before the end of the calendar year to be counted for 2023!*



# Looking Ahead

October – date to be announced – Town House Committee/Friends of the North  
Brookfield Town House Annual Meeting

November/December – Friends Bemis Winter Workshop

**Watch our Newsletter or Check our Facebook Posts for More  
Information**

**And Take a Peek at Our Redesigned Website  
[nbtownhouse.com](http://nbtownhouse.com).**

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Unfortunately, we must say goodbye to our former IT intern, Addie Reynolds, as she moves on to a real job.

**So, Volunteer Help is Needed to Manage Our  
Website and YouTube Channel**

**Pay = 0**

**Reward = satisfaction at being part of a team devoted to restoring a  
landmark and uniting a community**



If you are interested in helping the Friends in this way, contact us at  
[friends@nbtownhouse.com](mailto:friends@nbtownhouse.com)