

*A Finding Aid to the **Accidents/Crimes and Disasters Collection***

Date Range: 1804-2015

Compiled by Arielle Nathanson,

December 2021

Summary

Creator: The Easton Historical Society and Museum

Title: Accidents/Crimes and Disasters Collection

Dates: 1804-2015

Extent: 0.834 linear feet or 2 Hollinger Boxes

Abstract: The papers of this collection, date from 1804 to 2015 and contain newspaper articles and photographs pertaining to various criminal acts and natural disasters in the town of Easton.

Language: English

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information: This collection is the result of various donations of newspapers, photographs and oral histories and as such there is no one source to credit for their acquisition.

Accruals: Further accruals can be expected in an effort to document recent crimes and disasters in the area.

Restrictions on Access: Collection may only be accessed with the permission of the Easton Historical Society and Museum. Digitized versions of select materials are available through this finding aid and the Easton Historical Society and Museum's website at: eastonmahistoricalociety.org

Conditions Governing Use: The Accidents/Crimes and Disasters Collection is owned by the Easton Historical Society and Museum. It may be used for research, study and scholarship purposes. Permission to quote, publish or copy these materials requires the permission of the Easton Historical Society and Museum, which can be contacted at: eastonmahsmuseum@gmail.com or 508-238-7774.

Preferred Citation: Accidents/Crimes and Disasters Collection, 1804-2015, Easton Historical Society and Museum, [item].

Processing Note: This collection was fully processed and a finding aid created by Arielle Nathanson. Select materials from this collection were digitized in 2021 and are accessible online. To request virtual access to non digitized materials, please contact the Easton Historical Society and Museum.

Historical Note

The car accidents involving Edwin A. Keach (1982-2003) and Nicole St. John (1987-2009) was significant in the town of Easton. Edwin A. Keach was the son of Attorney John Keach (1938-2007) who was prominent in town affairs. He acted as an assessor and town moderator. His son was killed as the result of a highschool prank gone wrong. An obstacle was placed in the road, intended to be an annoyance, but instead caused his death. Nicole St. John collided with a tractor trailer after dropping a friend off at their home. The accident happened at the intersection of Foundry Street and Prospect Street, an area well known for causing accidents. Her death led to public outcry and traffic lights being installed at that intersection.

Over the years Easton has experienced its share of weather related disasters. The first of which was the gale of 1815, which caused extensive damage. However, by the time the next weather related disaster, the Hurricane of 1938 happened, no one was alive to recall the gale. The town was unprepared for the wind damage and lost around 700 trees. The next notable event was the tornado of 1947. Such an event is rare in New England and it is the only one on record for the town of Easton. The Flood of 1968 was significant as well, in that it caused the dam at Flyaway Pond to give way. That failure created excessive damage to roads, bridges and parked cars. It took more than a year for the town to fully recover from the damage. The rushing waters unleashed by the dam washed away cars parked at the Ames Shovel Shops and left fish caught 20 feet up in trees. The water created damage all the way to West Bridgewater, until eventually draining into the Hockomock Swamp. The next disaster was the Blizzard of 1978. It brought the town to a standstill for more than a week and made driving impossible. Power outages lasted for several weeks and the snow that was piled up in parking lots lasted through to the end of that summer. The damage was so extensive that residents still speak of it today.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of this collection, date from 1804 to 2015 and contain newspaper articles and photographs pertaining to various criminal acts and natural disasters in the town of Easton. The most prominent topics in this collection are: car accidents, fires, homicides, robberies, blizzards, floods and hurricanes. This collection is arranged into two subgroups; criminal acts and disasters. Subgroup 1 Accidents/Criminal Acts, has ten series and multiple subsequent subseries. Subgroup 2 Disasters, has six series and multiple subsequent subseries. Series are arranged by the type of accident/crime or disaster and subseries are arranged by specific document genres, dates, locations or actions, as will be described below. All subgroups, series and subseries are presented alphabetically or chronologically. Notable materials in this collection include: pictures of

the aftermath of the flood of 1968 and the aftermath of the hurricane of 1969, and newspapers from the 1978 blizzard and the murder of Beth Spartichino.

Subgroup 1: Accidents/Criminal Acts. The materials in this subgroup date from 1879 to 2015. Series and subseries are arranged by the type of accident or crime and then by its location or subject of focus. All groupings are presented alphabetically and then ordered chronologically. Notable materials include: newspaper articles relating to several influential car accidents, the Carriage House fire and the 2013 Marathon Bombing.

Series 1.1: Animals. The materials in this series date from 1993 to 2009. Subseries are arranged by the focus of the articles and presented alphabetically. The most notable items are the articles about Easton's beloved turkey Fred.

Series 1.2: Car Accidents. The materials in this series date from 1921 to 1964. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. The most notable items contain mentions of Edwin A. Keach and Nicole St. John.

Series 1.3: Drownings. The materials in this series date from 1954 to 2007. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. There are no particularly notable items in this series.

Series 1.4: Fires. The materials in this series date from 1879 to 2015. Subseries are arranged by the types of buildings affected by the fires and presented alphabetically. The most notable newspaper article is about a fire that destroyed part of the Ames Shovel Shops in 1959.

Series 1.5: Homicides. The materials in this series date from 1903 to 2011. Subseries are arranged by specific cases and ordered alphabetically. The most prominent articles are those about Beth Spartichino and the bones found near Langwater Pond.

Subseries 1.6: Marathon Bombing. The materials in this series date from 2013. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. There are no particularly notable items in this series, as they are all newspaper articles relating to the event.

Subseries 1.7: Plane Crash. The materials in this series date from 2009. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. There are no particularly notable items in this series, as they are all newspaper articles relating to the event.

Subseries 1.8: Rescues. The materials in this series date from 1938 to 1995. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. Notable materials include: articles detailing how a dog protected a young boy and how another boy was saved by his sisters from falling down a crevasse.

Subseries 1.9: Robberies. The materials in this series date from 1885 to 1993. Subseries are arranged by location and establishment targeted. All materials are ordered alphabetically. Notable materials include articles about bank and post office robberies.

Subseries 1.10: Miscellaneous. The materials in this series date from 1933 to 2011. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. Notable articles cover: an exploding sidewalk, a lightning strike and an accidental shooting.

Subgroup 2: Disasters. The materials in this subgroup date from 1804 to 2011. Series are arranged by type of disaster and subseries by date or document genre. Series are presented alphabetically and the majority of subseries are presented chronologically. Notable materials include: the pictures mentioned above and news articles from the 1898 storm near Portland.

Subseries 2.1: Blizzards. The materials in this series date from 1804 to 2011. Subseries are arranged and presented chronologically. Significant items relate to the blizzard of 1978.

Subseries 2.2: Floods. The materials in this series date from 1968 to 1978. Subseries are arranged chronologically and by document genre. All materials within subseries follow a chronological order. Notable items are the news articles and pictures of the 1968 flood.

Subseries 2.3: Hurricanes. The materials in this series date from 1938 to 2011. Subseries are arranged and presented chronologically. Significant items relate to the hurricanes of 1938 and 1969.

Subseries 2.4: Storm of 1898 (Portland). The materials in this series date from 1898 to 1954. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. There are no particularly notable items in this series, as they are all newspaper articles relating to the event.

Subseries 2.5: Tornadoes. The materials in this series date from 1941 to 1947. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. There are no particularly notable items in this series, as they are all brief newspaper articles.

Subseries 2.6: Miscellaneous. The materials in this series date from 1940 to 1977. There are no subseries and all materials are ordered chronologically. The most notable article covers the court ruling from the fireworks factory explosion of 1972.

Series Outline

The Accidents/Crimes and Disasters Collection is arranged into two subgroups, with multiple series and subseries. The arrangement is as follows:

Subgroup 1: Accidents/Criminal Acts, 1879-2015

Series 1.1: Animals, 1993-2009

Subseries 1.1.1: Birds, 1997-2009

Subseries 1.1.2: Cats, 1993

Subseries 1.1.3: Pigs, 1995

Series 1.2: Car Accidents, 1921-1964

Series 1.3: Drownings, 1954-2007

Series 1.4: Fires, 1879-2015

Subseries 1.4.1: Barns, 1898-1990

Subseries 1.4.2: Churches, 1949-1969

Subseries 1.4.3: Factories, 1910-2011

Subseries 1.4.4: House Fires, 1879-2013

Subseries 1.4.5: Store/Restaurant Fires, 1922-2015

Series 1.5: Homicides, 1903-2011

Subseries 1.5.1: Beth Spartichino's Murder, 2011

Subseries 1.5.2: Bones Found, 2010

Subseries 1.5.3: Miscellaneous, Undated

Series 1.6: Marathon Bombing, 2013

Series 1.7: Plane Crash, 2009

Series 1.8: Rescues, 1938-1995

Series 1.9: Robberies, 1885-1993

Subseries 1.9.1: Banks and Post Offices, 1885-1972

Subseries 1.9.2: General Robberies and Vandalism, 1893-1993

Series 1.10: Miscellaneous, 1933-2011

Subgroup 2: Disasters, 1804-2011

Series 2.1: Blizzards, 1804-2011

Subseries 2.1.1: 1804

Subseries 2.1.2: 1940

Subseries 2.1.3: 1978

Subseries 2.1.4: 2011

Series 2.2: Floods, 1968-1978

Subseries 2.2.1: 1968 News Articles

Subseries 2.2.2: 1968 Pictures

Subseries 2.2.3: Miscellaneous, Undated

Series 2.3: Hurricanes, 1938-2011

Subseries 2.3.1: 1938

Subseries 2.3.2: 1944

Subseries 2.3.3: 1954

Subseries 2.3.4: 1969

Subseries 2.3.5: 2011

Subseries 2.3.6: Miscellaneous, 2011

Series 2.4: Storm of 1898 (Portland), 1898-1954

Series 2.5: Tornadoes, 1941-1947

Subseries 2.5.1: 1941

Subseries 2.5.2: 1947

Series 2.6: Miscellaneous, 1940-1977

Related Materials

Pictures of the 1968 flood and 1969 hurricane have been digitized. All virtual materials are available upon request or at the Easton Historical Society and Museum's webpage:

<https://www.eastonmahistoricalsociety.org/#/>.

Container List

Subgroup 1: Accidents/Criminal Acts, 1879-2015

Series 1.1: Animals, 1993-2009

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	Birds, 1997-2009
1	2	Cats, 1993
1	3	Pigs, 1995

Series 1.2: Car Accidents, 1921-1964

Box	Folder	Description
1	4	Car Accidents, 1921-1964

Series 1.3: Drownings, 1954-2007

Box	Folder	Description
1	5	Drownings, 1954-2007

Series 1.4: Fires, 1879-2015

Box	Folder	Description
1	6	Barns, 1898-1990
1	7	Churches, 1949-1969
1	8	Factories, 1910-2011
1	9	House Fires, 1879-2013
1	10	Store/Restaurant Fires, 1922-2015

Series 1.5: Homicides, 1903-2011

Box	Folder	Description
1	11	Beth Spartichino's Murder, 2011
1	12	Bones Found, 2010
1	13	Miscellaneous, Undated

Series 1.6: Marathon Bombing, 2013

Box	Folder	Description
1	14	Marathon Bombing, 2013

Series 1.7: Plane Crash, 2009

Box	Folder	Description
1	15	Plane Crash, 2009

Series 1.8: Rescues, 1938-1995

Box	Folder	Description
1	16	Rescues, 1938-1995

Series 1.9: Robberies, 1885-1993

Box	Folder	Description
1	17	Banks and Post Offices, 1885-1972
1	18	General Robberies and Vandalism, 1893-1993

Series 1.10: Miscellaneous, 1933-2011

Box	Folder	Description
1	19	Miscellaneous, 1933-2011

Subgroup 2: Disasters, 1804-2011**Series 2.1: Blizzards, 1804-2011**

Box	Folder	Description
1	20	1804
1	21	1940
1	22	1978
1	23	2011

Series 2.2: Floods, 1968-1978

Box	Folder	Description
2	24	1968 News Articles
2	25	1968 Pictures
2	26	Miscellaneous, Undated

Series 2.3: Hurricanes, 1938-2011

Box	Folder	Description
2	27	1938
2	28	1944
2	29	1954
2	30	1969
2	31	2011
2	32	Miscellaneous, 2011

Series 2.4: Storm of 1898 (Portland), 1898-1954

Box	Folder	Description
2	33	Storm of 1898, 1898-1954

Series 2.5: Tornadoes, 1941-1947

Box	Folder	Description
2	34	1941
2	35	1947

Series 2.6: Miscellaneous, 1940-1977

Box	Folder	Description
2	36	Miscellaneous, 1940-1977