

EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TRAIN TRACKS



Volume 9, Issue 3

MARCH 2009

CALENDAR

The mission of the Easton Historical Society is to preserve, promote and interpret the unique industrial, social, cultural, architectural and environmental history of the Town.

CLASS OF '53 DONATES MODEL OF OLIVER AMES HIGH SCHOOL

The Oliver Ames High School Class of 1953 recently presented a wonderful model of the original 1895 Oliver Ames High School building to the Easton Historical Society. Given on behalf of the Class of 1953, the scale model was made in Florida by a model maker, and was built from photographs taken by Joseph Camara. Richard Bissett, Joseph Camara, Lee Williams, Ruth Millett and the Class of 1953 made the donation of this remarkable model possible. The model will become part of a permanent exhibit so it can be enjoyed by the many former students who visit the Society. The Society thanks the members of the Class of 1953 for this very meaningful gift, and appreciates the efforts and generosity of those who made it possible.



Richard Bissett, left, and Joseph Camara, class of 1953, present a model of the original Oliver Ames High School to the Easton Historical Society.

Note: The April and May Open Houses will be held on the 3rd Sunday due to the Easter and Mother's Day holidays.

Sunday, March 8th, Daylight Savings Time Begins. Set your clocks so you don't miss our March Open House!

Sunday, March 8th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M. Ice Cutting display, tools, photos, videos of ice cutting in Easton.

Thursday, March 26th, Chowder and Chatter sponsored by Lee and Kevin Williams, 6:00 P.M. at Southeastern Regional. Reservation form on page 7.

Sunday, April 12th, Easter Sunday! No Open House.

Sunday, April 19th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M. Documents from Colonial Easton will be on display. Walking tour of Colonial sites around Shovel Shop Pond at 2 P.M., weather permitting.

Saturday, May 2nd, Spring Bottle Drive at the Station, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. Rain or Shine! Come on by and visit!

Sunday, May 10th, Mother's Day! No Open House.

Sunday, May 17th, Open House at the Station. Celebrating Graduates of the original Oliver Ames High School. High school model, class photos, yearbooks.

In our last newsletter we erroneously left off the names of two benefactors who very generously supported the Society's 60th Anniversary Gala: Peter Simpson and James Carlino. We regret the omission and offer our humble apologies. The Society appreciates their support!

*The Easton Historical Society Newsletter "Train Tracks" is published quarterly by the Easton Historical Society.
Officers: President—Deborah MacPhee, 1st Vice President—Kenneth J. Michel, 2nd Vice President—Edmund C. Hands,
Treasurer—Patricia A. Baker, Recording / Corresponding Secretary—Hazel L. Varella
Directors—Daniel B. Amorim, Karen R. Cacciapuoti, Nancy DeLuca, Andrew R. Salisbury, Robert J. Wooster
Curator—Frank T. Meninno*

The Station Master

President Deborah MacPhee

The Easton Historical Society will mark a key milestone in 2009, the 40th anniversary of The Former Old Colony Train Station serving as our home. The Station was a generous gift to The Society by the late State Senator Oliver Ames, the late Mr. John S. Ames Jr., the late Mr. William A. Parker, and the late Mr. David Ames.

The Station is one of seven buildings in Easton designed by renowned architect Henry Hobson Richardson, and features the heavy stonework and curved archways characteristic of his Romanesque style. With its historical pedigree, The Station both houses and serves as a key part of our collection, as well as a great base of operations for our educational outreach programs and member activities.

We remain committed to preserving The Station. Your annual dues payments and generous contributions help make this work possible, and for that The Board of Directors thanks you.

We are blessed to receive many donations of new artifacts and items unique to the history of our town. I'll mention two recent acquisitions here.

The Oliver Ames Class of 1953 recently donated a replica of the original Oliver Ames High School to the Society. This building is still located on Lincoln Street, and continues to serve the town to this day, as housing for senior citizens. The model includes a classroom that lights up, and this is a tribute to a long-time OAHS teacher, Mrs. Veronica Carter. Our thanks to Joe Camara, Dick Bissett, Lee Williams, Ruth Millett, and the Class of 1953 for the model.

The Society recently received 176 color aerial photos from Lyn White. The photos were taken from 1998 to 2000, and cover several areas of town, and each is labeled. The photos were taken by Lyn during flights with her husband and former Society President, Ed White. The photos help ensure that future generations will understand the characteristics of the town at the turn of the millennium.

If you can, please stop by one of our Open Houses, which are held the second Sunday of every month (except April and May, when we will be open on the third Sunday), and feature a different display created by our Curator, Frank Meninno. Look forward to seeing you there!

Curator's Corner

Curator / Caretaker Frank T. Meninno

This winter has been a typical old-fashioned New England winter: plenty of snow, ice and frigid arctic air. Henry Hobson Richardson must have had one of these New England winters in mind when he designed the 1882 Old Colony Railroad Station for Frederick Lothrop Ames, now home to your Easton Historical Society. One significant design component is the low roofline around the building that provides a feeling of shelter and safety. I can personally attest to the effectiveness of this masterful design. I have spent a good amount of time around the building this winter. I noticed that I can leave my vehicle under the front portico and walk around the building untouched by rain or snow, and protected from the wind. Once inside, the furor of New England's weather is quieted. One can barely hear the winds howling outside. The expanses of glass that Richardson used on the east and west sides of the building serve with purpose, keeping the elements out and allowing natural light to come in from beneath that protective overhang, brightening a dark day. Our building is timeless in a way. Although it's intended use has changed, it's purpose has not. Instead of protecting passengers, it now protects our wonderful collections. As we approach the 40th anniversary of this generous donation we must be ever mindful of and grateful for both this precious gift and its givers: John S. Ames, Jr., David Ames, William A. Parker, and Senator Oliver F. Ames.

In Memoriam

The Society sadly announces the passing of Mrs. Sally G. King on November 20, 2008, after a long and courageous battle with Alzheimer’s Disease.

Born in Lancaster, New Hampshire, she was a direct descendent of the founders of the town. She met her husband, the late Robert D. King, when both were students at the Boston University School of Music. Mrs. King taught music in the public schools of Rangeley, Maine, New Britain, Connecticut and Wakefield.

Mrs. King was an accomplished musician, playing the violin, viola and organ. Many of you know Mrs. King due to her long association with Unity Church, where she served as Choir Director and church organist. She also played with the Brockton Symphony.

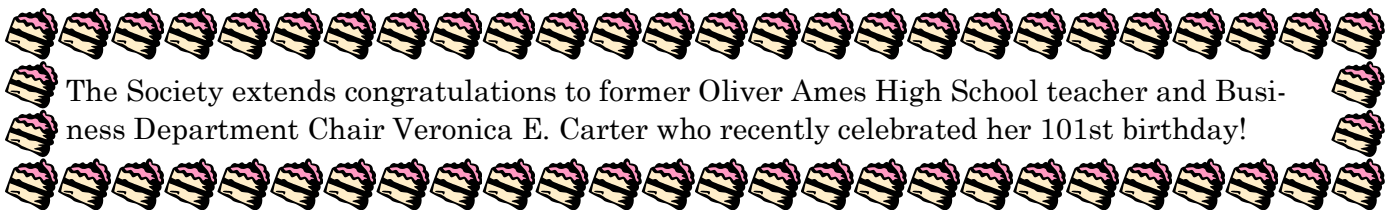
Mrs. King and her husband operated the Robert King Music Company, publisher and mail-order retailer of music for brass instruments. The company originated in and was operated from their home on Canton Street, North Easton for many years.

The King family have been loyal supporters of the Society in a number of ways. It is through their generosity that the Robert D. and Sally G. King Trust was established for the benefit of the Society. The income from this fund has been instrumental in allowing the Society to grow into who we are today. The thoughtfulness of the family resulted in memorial donations being sent to the Easton Historical Society, a kindness which is definitely appreciated.

Mrs. King is survived by two daughters, Judith Drake King of Farmington, CT., and Nancy Page King of Cambridge; a son-in-law, Stephen Michael Gryc of Farmington, CT.; a grandson, William Edward Gryc and his wife Cary Long of Atlanta, GA.; and a sister, Polly Noble Berry of Brookfield, N.H.

The members of the Easton Historical Society extend our sympathy to the family.

The Society also expresses our sympathy to the families of these members who have recently passed away: Jon Gilmore, Dorothy “Dot” Berry, Mae Brooks, Lorraine A. Anderson, E. Elizabeth Barrows, Hope W. Preuss, and Barbara J. Williams.



The Society extends congratulations to former Oliver Ames High School teacher and Business Department Chair Veronica E. Carter who recently celebrated her 101st birthday!



SPRING BOTTLE AND CAN DRIVE

The Easton Historical Society will hold it’s spring bottle and can drive on Saturday, May 2nd from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Station, rain or shine. All clean, returnable bottles and cans are welcome. For pickup, please call Ken Martin at 508-238-2185. Proceeds benefit the restoration fund at the Society. Thanks to Ken and his able assistant Ed Hands for running this important fundraiser. Every bottle and can you donate can make a difference. Thank you for your support!

AN EXTRAORDINARY GIFT

As the members of the Board of Directors of the Society were meeting at the home of the President Hazel L. Varella November 7th, 1969, the doorbell rang. At the door was Attorney Abraham Brooks with a key. He indicated that the key was to the former Old Colony Railroad Station which had been purchased for the Society in a silent auction by Messrs. John S. Ames, Jr., David Ames, William A. Parker, and Senator Oliver F. Ames. Attorney Brooks quickly left as the Board members sat stunned for a long moment and then decided to explore this extraordinary gift.

Flashlights would definitely be needed! The windows of the structure had been boarded many years before. The Varellas had two, and Duncan Oliver had one in his car: three for seven people. The key amazingly worked, and as the “explorers” entered, they experienced the many odors of a building that had not been occupied for more than a decade. The flashlights showed walls including the woodwork that had all been painted New Haven green. Many articles were lying on the floors of the two waiting rooms, baggage room, and ticket office as if someone had expected to return the next day.

After inspecting the first floor as well as they could, the seven ventured to the stairs leading to the second floor. The stairs include two bends which were not the easiest to navigate with three flashlights. Nevertheless, everyone reached the second floor to find mattresses that had been used more than a decade before by engineers, other railroad employees, and passengers on the midnight train. Again the odors were overwhelming. Many other items were scattered around the two large rooms, the two rooms under the side eaves, and in the closets. After almost an hour of exploring, the members returned to 121 Center Street where more coffee was prepared.

Extraordinary emotions existed with the realization that the Society had been given an H. H. Richardson-designed railroad station landscaped by Frederick L. Olmstead. But how did we honor the trust of our benefactors! The Society’s treasury had approximately two hundred dollars, and electricity, plumbing, heating, and numerous other expenses including insurance were needed. That was our challenge, and the Board was determined to succeed.

Hazel L. Varella



Pictured above is the Old Colony Railroad Station, now the home of the Easton Historical Society. Designed by Henry Hobson Richardson for Frederick Lothrop Ames, it was completed in 1882. Landscaping by Frederick Law Olmsted was completed in 1884. This photograph was taken around 1885, shortly after the completion of the entire project.

VITAL RECORDS ON THE WEB

We get many requests for genealogical information. We thought you might find these sites useful in your genealogical adventures.

For Vital Records of Easton's Births, Death, and Marriages from 1725 to 1843, go to the official Easton, Massachusetts website at www.easton.ma.us and under Departments link on to the Town Clerk. For the Vital Records -click on <http://home.earthlink.net/~jamalthby1/>. Then click on the last item in the second column Transcriptions of the Vital Records of Easton, Massachusetts. The index is by families. Click on the page of the family you are researching. Marriages are listed from 357-390.

For census records from 1790, link to the Ames Free Library website at www.amesfreelibrary.org and then click Community Information. You should then click on Easton History and Genealogy. To the right of the History and Genealogy click on Tourtillout Family Genealogy.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

An Oliver Ames High School sweater belonging to Joe Camara, photos and written materials from the O.A.H.S. Class of 1953, their reunions, and materials from the multi-class reunion, from Joe Camara; an Oliver Ames High School jacket with field hockey letters from Patricia Baker; a 1967 Eastoner from Ernie Camara; Authentic and reproduction Civil War items and papers including mini-balls, uniform buttons, bayonet, "Brogan" shoes, from Eric Andrews, Mark Nickerson, and Mike Grossman ; a collection of early 20th century architectural books that belonged to Easton architect John Clement Johnson (1867-1936) who lived on Jenny Lind Street, from Wayne Legge; a blacksmith's anvil and vise that were owned by Frank Phelan in his blacksmith shop on Bay Road, south of Highland Street, from Roger McNamara; a 1922 Langwater Guernsey Sale Catalog, and a photo of the Kent family, from Ron Somerville; 176 color aerial photos of Easton taken by, and donated by Lyn White.

The Easton Historical Society is grateful for the continued generosity of the donors of these and other historical items to our collections.

Below is the obituary of J. Clement Johnson, whose architectural books now reside in our collections.

J. Clement Johnson Dies in No. Easton

North Easton, March 30 (1936)-J. Clement Johnson, aged 68, prominent architect of this town who designed many of the town buildings died after a brief illness this morning at his home, 32 Jenny Lind Street.

Mr. Johnson was highly esteemed throughout the Eastons and took an active interest in town affairs, serving on the Finance Board for many years. He was a member of the North Easton M. E. church and the Damocles Lodge, Knights of Pythias, of Brockton.

He leaves his wife, Margaret Johnson; one son, Harold C.; a grand-daughter and sister, Miss Elizabeth G. Johnson, all of Easton.

The funeral will be held at the late residence Wednesday at 3 P.M. Interment will be in the South Easton cemetery.

2009 DUES LETTERS MAILED

Your dues letters for 2009 are in the mail. This year, we have included a look at some of our accomplishments in 2008 and a glimpse of plans for this year. Please be sure to return your dues at the earliest opportunity. They are an important part of supporting what we do. If your address label has a 2009 on it, you are all set. If your label has another year in the upper right hand corner, your dues are due. Please let us know if we have incorrect information.

We know these are very difficult times. Many thanks to those of you who have already renewed or recently joined. Special thanks to those who thoughtfully enclosed a little extra! Thank you, and we look forward to a great 2009!

Past Memories of Bay Road and Life on the Farm in 1938 -1942

By Althea Russell Thornton

Part One

Time is flying and I'm one of only a few, maybe the only person, that is still here. So, here goes: I grew up on the farm on Bay Road just north of Beaver Dam Road. I remember when Bay Road was part gravel and many of the side roads were too. Cross Street, Beaver Dam Road, Summer Street and Randall Street. Up and down the street I saw the Copeland Cemetery, land previously owned by Copeland, Mrs. Della Stackpole, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Daily, Gunnar and Clara Anderson who rented from Mr. Johnson, Bob and Edna Frazer.

There was Gooch's Farm on Bay Road. There was a house set way back of the cemetery, one or two houses to Lincoln Street. There was a house we thought was haunted across from Cross Street, with the mile marker, possibly Leggats or Milanos. Across the street on the corner were chicken coops owned by Harco Farms. Then came Beaver Dam Road, Russell's (Rice), Johnson's the Dunbar Cemetery, Rhodin's, Mrs. Johnson and her daughter Adelaide, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Eldridge, Mr. and Mrs. Conrad. On the corner of Bay Road and Rockland Street there was a maple tree that we used to hug while waiting for the school bus. There was a stone marker just east of it in the field.

There were many elm trees, with their vase-like trunks, their branches spilled over in lovely arches. We had seven of them in our front yard. The catalpa tree is still there. In the back of the barn on the west side there was an apple orchard. Our friend, Jack Meredith from Natick, found us eating the unsprayed green apples and was horrified. He asked us to stop and he would go down to Ed Rohdin's store and buy us some candy. On the way home from school, there were wild sweet strawberries in front of the cemetery, wild high and low bush blueberries and huckleberries in summer on the east side of Bay Road. We picked the berries before breakfast for our cereal. There were wetlands on both sides up to Rockland Street. While walking to school there were yellow cowslips on the west side, clear pools with frogs and tadpoles with egg nests and polywogs. There is a small stream winding under Summer Street over to Bay Road, under it on the east side, behind Eldridge's house to a small pool then heading east. In the woods across from Summer Street was a cabin that Mr. Conant lived in. He was very mysterious, living like a hermit. He had a grand piano in there. I was standing on Bay Road with Betty Eldridge across from Summer Street and we heard wonderful classical music wafting up to where we were standing near Charlie's greenhouses. I used to weed his plants and learned the names. I earned a dime once for doing that in the 1940's.

2009 CHOWDER AND CHATTER DINNER

The tenth annual “Chowder and Chatter” will be held Thursday, March 26th at 6 P. M. at the Southeastern Regional School, Route 106, South Easton. Again this special Historical Society event is underwritten by Lee and Kevin Williams. This always popular evening is usually booked within three days, so you are urged to have your reservation POSTMARKED Monday, March 9th. Any earlier postmarks will not be accepted in fairness to everyone else. After the traditional chowders, cornbread, desserts, and beverages served by the students, a panel discussion will focus on a comparison between secondary education then and now. All the panelists are Oliver Ames High School graduates who then returned to Easton to teach. Learn how their experiences compared as students and then educators. Representing English will be Robert “Buddy” Wooster; Social Studies, Debra Peterson Salisbury; Mathematics, Nancy Gomes DeLuca; Music, Robert Wheeler, and Physical Education, Michael Bulman with Edmund Hands as moderator. **THANK YOU, LEE AND KEVIN, FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!**

This has been an extremely cold winter, and donations will be used to defray some of the heating costs. All donations will be acknowledged by mail. The Society appreciates your generous support!

2009 CHOWDER AND CHATTER RESERVATION FORM

Please use this form to reserve your seat for the Chowder and Chatter dinner. Southeastern Regional High School is conveniently located at 250 Foundry Street (Route 106) in South Easton. Once again, Lee and Kevin Williams have generously offered to underwrite the cost of this event. As in the past, there is no cost to you. However, any donations made will go towards defraying the cost of heating the former Old Colony Railroad Station. Donations by check should be made out to the “Easton Historical Society.” Your generosity is very much appreciated!

Seating for this popular event is limited, and member requests will be filled on a first come, first served basis. Any seats left will be made available to the public. Please send this completed form to: Mrs. Hazel Varella, 121 Center Street, North Easton, MA 02356. Thank you!

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____ Email address _____

Number of Seats Requested (limit of 4) _____

Names of Attendees _____

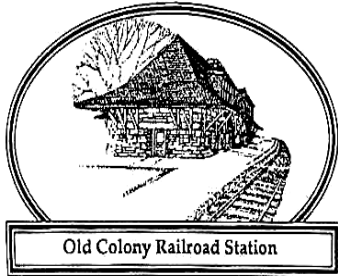
Donation \$ _____



WHO AM I?

Does anyone know who this is? Our mystery lady was found in the attic of a farm house that stands on the west side of Bay Road about a quarter of a mile north of Beaver Dam Road. A family with the surname Bean lived there from the 1850's at least until 1900. This portrait appears to be a print and looks to have been done around the time of the Civil War. We don't know if she is a Bean family member, or if she is someone who was well known at the time. If she looks familiar to anyone, please drop us a line!

EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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www.eastonhistoricalsociety.org

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