

EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TRAIN TRACKS



Volume 10, Issue 2

SPRING 2010

CALENDAR

All events are held at the Easton Historical Society unless otherwise noted.

*** Please note that even though we have the best intentions, the New England weather may not cooperate with our plans. If the weather is bad we may cancel an event. Please call ahead to see if the event is still being held. Thank you!

Sunday, March 14th, Daylight Savings Time Begins. Set your clocks ahead so you won't miss our events!

Sunday, March 14th, 1-5 P.M., Open House featuring Ice-Cutting tools, photos and videos of Monte's Ice House and a display of items from 1980 Olympic Gold Medalist Jim Craig!

Tuesday, April 6th, Annual Chowder and Chatter Dinner with thanks to Lee and Kevin Williams, 6 P.M. at Southeastern Regional High School. Information inside!

Sunday, April 11th, 1-5 P.M., Open House, Kids Discovery Day! Mini-tours, Show and Tell, More!

Saturday, May 8th, Spring Bottle Drive, 9 A.M.—1 P.M.

Sunday, May 9th, Happy Mother's Day! No open house today.

Sunday, May 16th, Annual Meeting at Queset, 2 P.M. Past President and author Duncan B. Oliver will be discussing "Maritime Ghosts and Legends around the Cape Cod area."

Looking ahead...

Monday, September 27th, Joint Society and Ames Free Library meeting with Ken Gloss with free verbal appraisals.

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.

A Message to Our Members from President Deborah MacPhee Shovel Shop Update

Some time ago we brought to your attention the situation regarding the former Ames Shovel Shop factory buildings in North Easton. As you are probably aware, the shovel shops were named as one of the National Trust's 11 Most Endangered Sites. The shovel shop buildings are currently slated to be developed as a Chapter 40 B affordable housing project. The current owners have been given a permit to develop over 180 units, a very dense population for a small area. The historic shovel factory buildings are also under threat of complete demolition, or at best, considerable alteration coupled with partial demolition.

There is an important new proposal being considered. Under a plan put forth by the Friends of the Ames Shovel Works, Beacon Communities will use historic tax credits along with a mix of private and public funding to develop the site in a more historically sensitive manner. In return for tax credits, Beacon will use strict historic preservation guidelines from the Department of the Interior. This proposal reduces density to just over 110 units, provides for more open space and allows pedestrian passage through the property to Main Street. The Main Street area would also be revitalized with a manageable influx of new residents that would not place an overdue burden on the surrounding neighborhoods.

Continued on page 2

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—David Ames, Jr., Nancy DeLuca, Debra Salisbury, Robert J. Wooster
Curator—Frank T. Meninno

Shovel Shop Update, From page 1

The public funding for this venture comes from monies held by the Easton Community Preservation Committee (CPC), as provided by the Community Preservation Act (CPA). This proposal meets all the requirements set forth in the CPA act, namely, affordable housing, open space and historic preservation. To their credit Easton's CPC committee has wisely voted to recommend to town meeting a two part funding commitment: \$3 million dollars for a deeded preservation restriction that provides for preservation of the historic structures on the site, and a loan of \$4.5 million to be repaid with interest to the CPC. The preservation restriction would hold the promise that the site would not be developed further, and that the historic buildings would remain intact. The developer would be paid the \$3 million in return for forever giving up the opportunity to increase the scope of the project, therefore reducing his overall profit and future income dollars. There are sufficient CPA funds available to assume this responsibility as well as allowing for future open space and recreation purchases.

Beacon has extensive experience in redeveloping this type of property. Projects such as this one with a mix of private and public financing have been extremely successful. Recently an old school in Sharon was converted to housing. That project required a partnership between Beacon and the Town of Sharon, and now Sharon is reaping the benefits. The benefits of this project clearly outweigh the cost to the town. However, it will require a 2/3 vote to pass at a special town meeting scheduled for April 5th before the project can move forward with all other approvals. Our members' attendance and support will be critical to the success of this project. Anything less could result in the irreplaceable loss of a vital part of our nation's, and our town's heritage. Many people around the country are watching this proposal, which could serve as a model to preserve other historic sites in the United States. Let us do what needs to be done; let us now act to preserve that which is uniquely Easton.

Curator's Corner

Curator / Caretaker Frank T. Meninno

How does one put a 300 pound pig into a 3" x 3" wedding cake box? Very carefully, of course! Actually, through the generosity of Mrs. David Ames, Sr. that is exactly what we received in December. Now, let me explain that one.

William Hadwen Ames, older son of former Governor Oliver Ames, was the cause of some excitement when the carcass of a 300 pound pig arrived on ice at the Old Colony Railroad Station. This pig was destined to be roasted, but not in the usual way. Mr. Ames had been hard at work improving the process of cremation, which until that time was not very efficient at all. I don't know what spurred his interest in such a subject, but he was extremely talented and fascinated with mechanisms of all sorts. However, he put his all into researching, developing and testing a variety of oil fired furnaces. Once he thought he had it right, he ordered the now famous pig. Eventually the pig made its way to Queset, an Ames' home on Main Street. The experiment was run, and the results were a smashing success! All that remained of our extra-large cloven hoofed hero was a small pile of ash, some of which fit neatly into a box no larger than a piece of wedding cake.

This was the first successful test of an oil fired cremation oven. A working model was soon installed in the Forest Hills Cemetery, where it provided excellent service for years. I now have a "burning" desire to research the story, and I hope to have a more complete tale to tell once my research is finished. Stay tuned!

In Memoriam

The Easton Historical Society sadly announces the passing of Director Daniel B. Amorim. Dan, a lifelong resident of Easton, died on Thursday, December 10, 2009. He was 80 years old.

Dan was a welcome addition to the Board. A frequent visitor, he freely shared his extensive knowledge of Easton, especially the Elm Street neighborhood where he lived. He was especially proud that he lived in the same house (one of the Seven Sisters along Elm Street) for seventy-five years! Dan quickly helped to improve the looks of our Society's grounds by directing the cutting of the privet hedges, and was able to have two large dead trees removed from our grounds. He loved to share his extensive knowledge of trees and plants with us, which knowledge will continue to help us to maintain the grounds for many years to come. He was the retired Tree Warden for the Town of Easton, and a member of the Tree Warden's Association of South Eastern, MA and the Norfolk Bristol Tree Warden's Association. He was an avid gardener and loved to give vegetables to relatives and friends. Dan was instrumental in naming Easton as the "Tree City". He served on the Easton Fire Department as a Volunteer Fire Fighter.

Dan was a US Army Veteran of the Korean Conflict, and he had a special place in his heart for his fellow veterans, working tirelessly for their benefit. He was involved in the Easton VFW George F. Schindler Post, serving as their past Commander and the present Chaplain. Dan spent many hours visiting with veterans in hospitals and at home.

He was the son of the late Romeo & Adeline (Madeiros) Amorim. He was the loving brother of Vasco Amorim and his wife Patricia, Charles Amorim and his wife Catherine, John Amorim and his wife Linda, Dennis Amorim and his wife Caryl, Francellina Pratt, Valdemira Stearns, Mary Theresa Goodnow, Grace O'Gorman, Jean Amorim, Linda Pietropaula and her husband Ralph, and the late Margaret McSweeney. He was the best friend of Elaine Schwartz of Norton. He is survived by 30 nieces and nephews and many great nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made in Daniel's memory to the Easton VFW Post Scholarship Fund or the Easton Veteran's War Memorial at PO Box 103 North Easton, MA 02356.

Landmarks

Congratulations to Robert and Jean (Southworth) Alger of Eastondale who recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary!

Happy Birthday wishes are in order for Mrs. Veronica Carter, former Oliver Ames High School teacher and Business Department chair, who recently turned 102 years young!

Very happy birthday wishes are also extended to Mrs. David Ames, Sr., who recently turned a very young 91 years old!

One hundred years ago construction began on the mansion at Borderland, home of Professor Oakes and his wife Blanche Ames.

Do you have any landmarks? Please contact us, and we will publish them in the newsletter for all of our members to share.

Oops! The editor sincerely apologizes for two errors in the last newsletter. First, the name of one of the boys in the baseball photo was mis-spelled. It should be Ed Delgado. Second, and most painfully (as you'll see), in the article on growing up on Bay Road by Althea Thornton; it should have said "NO" Novocain was used by the visiting dentist (ouch!). My apologies to all.—Ed.

Coming Events

Cutting Ice at Monte's Pond / Jim Craig Ice Hockey

Do you remember ice boxes? Was there one in your house? Where did the ice man get all his ice? Get the answer to the question at our ever popular Ice Cutting open house which will take place on Sunday, March 14th, from 1-5 P.M. at the Station.

Easton was once dotted with small ice houses, where each neighborhood could get the ice to keep their meats and perishables cool. Ice cutting was a year round activity, as ponds were prepared during the summer and fall for the winter ice. Cutting the ice itself was a unique operation that needs to be seen to be believed. Many of the small ice houses in Easton went by the wayside with the advent of modern refrigeration. One person, Fred J. Monte, became very successful. He operated an ice house at what became known as Monte's Pond on Elm Street Extension, from 1927 to 1967. His ice house was the last major operating ice house in New England, supplying homeowners and commercial enterprises, fishermen and dairy farmers as far away as Cape Cod and southern New England.

Thanks to many donors over the years we have a collection of photos, home video and a few tools that document cutting ice at Monte's. Ed Lomer of Unionville has loaned us some great examples of the tools used by the ice harvesters. Thank you Ed! All these will be on display in March. Join us for a really "cool" afternoon!

In addition to our traditional ice-cutting exhibit, a special feature will honor the accomplishments of Jimmy Craig on the 30th anniversary of his extraordinary achievement in the 1980 Winter Olympics. On display will be some of the trophies and plaques he received in his youth playing with the Easton Junior Hockey League and also at the Jim Craig Day May 18, 1980 including the gold key to the Town of Easton. Other memorabilia including collages of his Olympic accomplishments will be on display.

Kids (and grownups!) Discovery Day

Our April 11th Open House will be your opportunity to discover Easton's history through a variety of activities. Drop by the Society from 1-5 P.M. to find out what makes Easton so special. Planning is underway for several mini-tours of the area surrounding the Society, and some show and tell items and small kid activities as well. This is a kid-friendly event, so bring along your children, grandchildren, neighbors, for a fun afternoon! This is also a great opportunity to bring in bottles and cans for our spring drive. See you here!

Ken Gloss / Brattle Book Shop

On Monday, September 27th, the Easton Historical Society will hold a joint meeting with the Ames Free Library-Easton's Public Library. The featured speaker will be Ken Gloss, proprietor of the famous Brattle Book Shop in Boston. Mr. Gloss is an expert on rare and collectable books. He is always entertaining, and usually brings a few literary treasures to share.

Do you have a book that you think might be valuable? Bring it along for a FREE verbal appraisal! Who knows what special treasure you might have on your bookcase. Time and location will be announced in an upcoming newsletter and in the Easton Journal. We hope you will join us for an evening of literary enlightenment!

2010 Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, May 16th, 2:00 P.M. at Queset. Queset is the former home of Oakes Angier and Winthrop Ames, and is located behind the Ames Free Library on Main Street. After a short business meeting, Past-president, author and historian Duncan B. Oliver will present a talk entitled "Maritime Ghosts and Legends around the Cape Cod area." Be sure to join us for what promises to be a great afternoon!

OLD HOUSES of EASTON

Josiah Keith House, 1717



Easton is fortunate to be the locale of many old houses, most of which have been well preserved. When this subject is brought up for discussion, one house immediately comes to mind: the Josiah Keith House on Bay Road, the oldest standing house in Easton (for that matter, the oldest of any structure still standing) which is also located on the oldest road in town.

Josiah was the son of Rev. James Keith of W. Bridgewater, and came to Easton as early as 1715, building a barn on what was then known as the Bay Path. For several seasons he drove his cattle here to graze on the tender meadow grass and to drink from the nearby Mulberry Meadow Brook. He pitched for some land and by 1717 had constructed a two story house just south of the barn. It is very possible that he lived in the barn while building his house.

Bay Road was the main thoroughfare through town, so it is no surprise that the house became a tavern and stage coach stop. Keith was involved in town politics, serving as moderator and treasurer. The arrival of a coach was sure to bring mail and news from Boston. Taverns also served as meeting places, so one can only imagine the discussions that must have taken place within the walls of this venerable home. The house functioned as a tavern until about 1754, the year Josiah died.

When first built, the rectangular house had two rooms on the ground floor, and two rooms above. The front of the house faced south. The house fell into disrepair after Josiah's death. In 1798 the first floor was removed and the second floor was lowered onto new sills, making a low studded house of one story.

About this time the home came into the possession of the Williams family, related to the Keith family by marriage. An addition was made to the house prior to 1800 which included a new front door location and a room for married couples. The addition is two steps lower than the existing house. The north side was built out to provide a roof over the well, which was otherwise open until about 1830. Josiah's original barn was struck by lightning and burned in 1902, 187 years after it was constructed. Other than that, the house now appears as it did in the 1830's. The house stayed in the family (Keith, Williams, Dean, related by marriage) for 207 years. One later owner was Mrs. John S. Ames, Sr. who completely restored the house in the 1960's.

The home is now owned by the Deware family, and Melanie Deware adds the following interesting information: "The tradition of entombing a child's shoe in a house (usually near an opening like the fireplace or a window or door) was to ward off evil and/or bring good luck. These are rare in New England, numbering fewer than 300 or so. They are called "concealment shoes." We found ours when we had the chimney renovated. It is clearly a very used up child's shoe, complete with worn heel and hole in the toe. We have been told that the parson's cupboard in the dining room once hid a baby during an Indian attack, and that one large, removable, raised panel along our bedroom fireplace was also built as a hiding space though we don't know that it was ever used. The front door features a double Christian cross design, perhaps indicative of the family's religious heritage. There is a beam in the well room that has 19 3/4" written on it, showing that it was salvaged from somewhere else before it's installation in the house. We have a 2-seat privy in our woodshed (the 1800 addition). Historic New England (formerly The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities) says that our corn crib is the oldest in the US still standing where built. We have a restored and working beehive bread oven in the kitchen. The house has only been owned by 5 families since 1717. And, Catherine (Cate) Miller/Dean, the last slave in Easton, lived here as well."

This is the first in a series on the old houses of Easton. Information for this article was taken from research done by Heman Howard during the late 1920's to the late 1930's, and from the series *Easton in Pictures* published in the *Green Flyer* during the 1950's, by various authors. Thanks to present owners Melanie and D. Scott DeWare for additions to this article.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

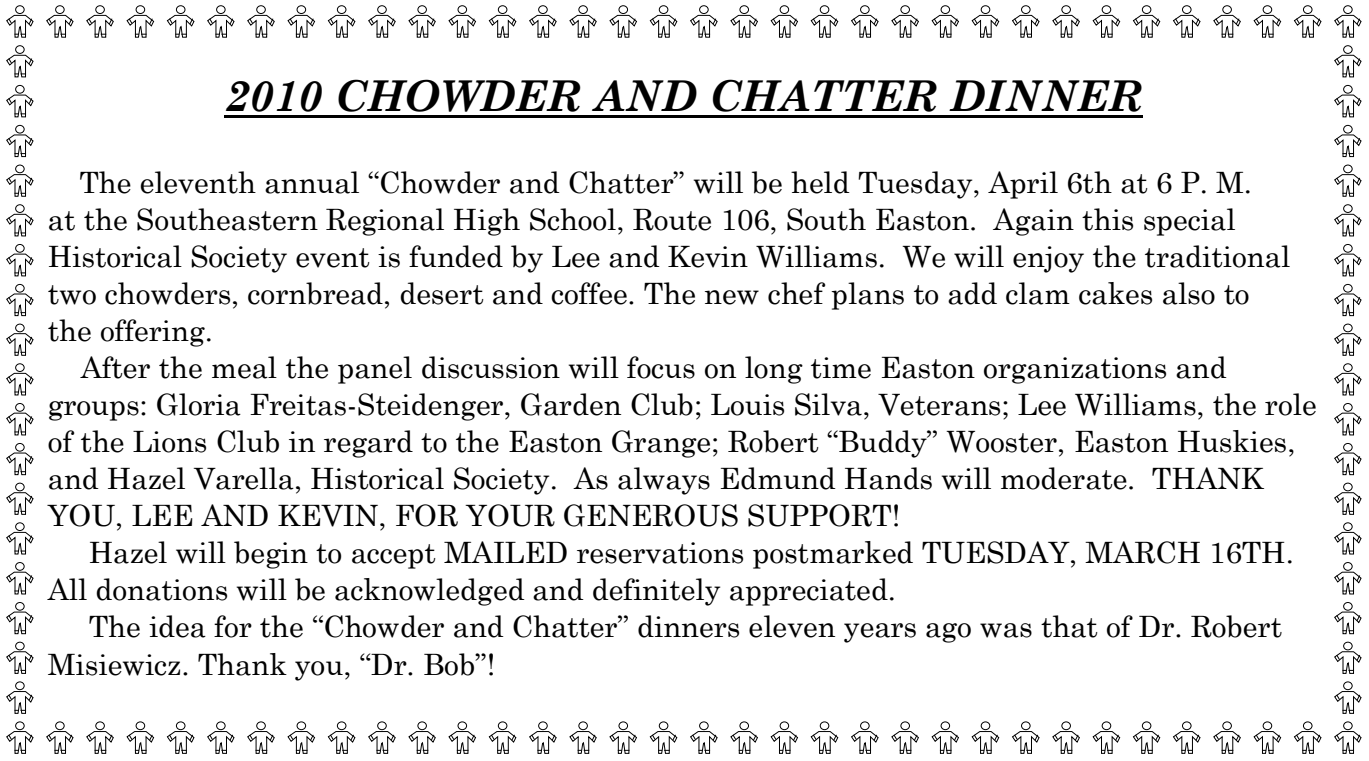
Copies of the booklet Hockomock Wonder Wetland, from John Kent; letter and ashes from a successful test of a crematory oven by William Hadwen Ames, from Mrs. David Ames, Sr. (see Curator's Corner); 1942 Easton directory, 1960's financial stock quote books, Harmony Grange cookbook, from Lee Williams; 2 letters regarding a church controversy in the 1830's, from Cyrus Cominos; early #6 Oliver Ames shovel, from Burt Lewis; four ledgers detailing payroll and other financial activities of early Morse industries, photo of Morse company boarding house, from Alfred B. Morse; framed photo of the O.A. H.S. 1927 Football Team, from William Yaskonis; Jason Drake's Bible in 2 volumes, 1847, from Mr. and Mrs. Norman Prew; Gurney family photos, news items, Pioneers Little League photo, O.A.H.S. graduation programs from 1915 and 1892, from Patricia Baker; Easton Visiting Nurse reports, 1930's—1970's, from Beverly Smith; O.A.H.S. football jacket with letter, 1963, from Clement Walsh; arm chair in green leatherette, from Diane Medeiros; Ames scrapbook with clippings about weddings, Ames family memorabilia including wedding invitations, etc. from Ron Hopkins; crystal cream pitcher used by Ruth Wry at many Society events, from Dr. and Mrs. Robert Misiewicz; collection of Masonic glasses inscribed with names of Worshipful Masters, 250th anniversary of the Masons in America glass, from Norma-Jean Hanscom; framed \$5 bill printed by the First National Bank of Easton, 1903, signed by Oliver Ames and George Barrows, owned by John S. Ames, Jr., from John S. Ames III; 1930's no trespassing poster with various laws against it printed on the notice, from Ralph Armstead; Southeastern Regional cap gown and cords, class of 2009, from Anthony Meninno; woman's silk knit purse, O.A.H.S. book cover inscribed by Karin Almquist, School Safety Merit Award given to Priscilla Almquist, hand written recipe book, from Priscilla Almquist-Olsen; 2 large leather-bound books about Massachusetts government including biographies of state legislators, inscribed to Governor Oliver Ames, from Ken Gloss of the Brattle Book Shop; photo of the Alson A. Gilmore home, later the Hatchfield home, 28 Center Street, circa 1890, from Robert Hatchfield; Massachusetts Registers, 1815 and 1817, 1956 Boston Social Register book, Easton Branch Railroad stock certificate, c. 1850's, ice fishing tip-ups, circa 1900, Ames paperweight, various other books, from Anne-Marie and Frank Meninno.

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

Many thanks to Hilliard's Candy of North Easton for their generous donation of a gift card for a door prize at our February 14th Valentine's Day open house. The prize was won by Rosalie Federico, who grew up on Picker Lane. Hilliard's Chocolates and Valentine's Day, a great combination!

THE SPRING BOTTLE AND CAN DRIVE IS COMING!

The Society will hold its annual Spring Bottle and Can Drive on Saturday, May 8th, from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at our headquarters, the former Old Colony Railroad Station, 80 Mechanic Street. The drive will be held rain or shine. Our faithful friend Ken Martin will once again oversee the activities. All Massachusetts returnable clean bottles and cans are welcomed! You may also drop off donations during the April open house. For pickup of large amounts, please call Ken at 508-238-2185, or for more information, please call the Society at 508-238-7774. All donations will be used towards planned restoration projects. As always, the Society thanks you for your terrific support!



2010 CHOWDER AND CHATTER DINNER

The eleventh annual “Chowder and Chatter” will be held Tuesday, April 6th at 6 P. M. at the Southeastern Regional High School, Route 106, South Easton. Again this special Historical Society event is funded by Lee and Kevin Williams. We will enjoy the traditional two chowders, cornbread, desert and coffee. The new chef plans to add clam cakes also to the offering.

After the meal the panel discussion will focus on long time Easton organizations and groups: Gloria Freitas-Steidenger, Garden Club; Louis Silva, Veterans; Lee Williams, the role of the Lions Club in regard to the Easton Grange; Robert “Buddy” Wooster, Easton Huskies, and Hazel Varella, Historical Society. As always Edmund Hands will moderate. **THANK YOU, LEE AND KEVIN, FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!**

Hazel will begin to accept MAILED reservations postmarked TUESDAY, MARCH 16TH. All donations will be acknowledged and definitely appreciated.

The idea for the “Chowder and Chatter” dinners eleven years ago was that of Dr. Robert Misiewicz. Thank you, “Dr. Bob”!

2010 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, all donations made will go towards support of various Society programs. 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 _____

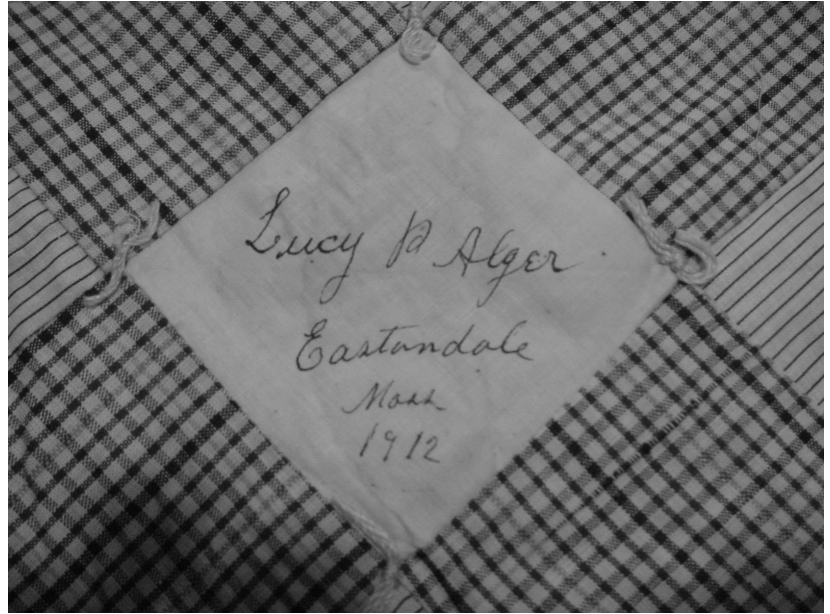
Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____ Email address _____

Number of Seats Requested (limit of 4) _____

Names of Attendees _____

Donation \$ _____



A Quilt, A Name, and a Face

We have the answer to our mystery quilt! After seeing the write up in the last newsletter, we received a note from Judy King identifying this as a "friendship quilt." That was our first big break. Norma Jean Hanscom then told us that the Eastondale Unitarian Church had a Women's Alliance group, and that many of the names on the quilt were a part of. We were sure we had our answer, but we weren't finished yet. Were we ever surprised when Bob and Jean Alger came in during December with a photo of Lucy P. Alger (1857-1916), whose square was featured! Lucy was Bob's grandmother. Many thanks to Judy, Norma Jean and the Algers for solving this mystery.

Address changing? Please tell us!

Address Service Requested

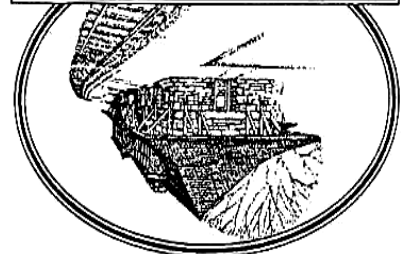
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