

# EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## TRAIN TRACKS



Volume 11, Issue 3

SPRING 2011

### CALENDAR

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

*Due to the restoration of the Women's Waiting Room, the Society will close the building during the month of February. We have plans to re-open sometime in March or early April. Watch the local papers and our web site for details!*

*Sunday, March 13th, Daylight Savings Time Begins. Don't forget to "spring ahead!"*

*Thursday, March 31st, Chowder and Chatter evening at Southeastern Regional High School, 6:00 P.M. as the guests of Lee and Kevin Williams. Reservation form inside! Thank you, Lee and Kevin!*

*Sunday, April 10th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M. Program TBA.*

*Friday, April 29th, Arbor Day*

*Sunday, May 8th, Happy Mother's Day! No open House Today.*

*Saturday, May 14th, Spring Bottle and Can Drive, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M.*

*Sunday, May 15th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M. Program TBA.*

*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.*

### "Chowder and Chatter"

Thursday, March 31st, 6 P. M.

Southeastern Regional High School, South Easton

The twelfth annual "Chowder and Chatter" will be held at the Southeastern Regional High School and again Lee and Kevin Williams will be our hosts. Chief Kfoury and the students will be preparing delicious chowder, clam fritters, cornbread, dessert, and coffee for us. After the excellent meal, the topic for the evening is always a popular one: "Growing Up in Easton". Jean Southworth Alger will be discussing Eastondale; Alice Kent McCarthy, the North End; Elizabeth Wade Porter, North Easton, and Lee Williams, Easton Furnace with Ed Hands as moderator. It is realized that not all sections of Easton will be represented on the panel, so it is hoped that at the end of the panel discussion, members of the audience will add their experiences. Reservations will be accepted which are postmarked Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup> or after. The event will be announced to the public March 18<sup>th</sup>, so it is recommended that you mail your request March 14<sup>th</sup> or soon after. All donations will be acknowledged. Please use the reservation form inside.

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### Annual Meeting

Plans are currently being developed for our Annual Meeting. Once a date is set in May the details will be announced in the Easton Journal as well as posted on our web site. Stay tuned!

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### 1855 MAP RAFFLE WINNER

The raffle for the colored 1855 colored map was won by Barbara Beech. The Ames Free Library-Easton's Public Library and the Historical Society each earned \$348.88 as a result of the raffle.

*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—Nancy DeLuca, Recording / Corresponding Secretary—Hazel L. Varella  
Directors—David Ames, Jr., Patricia Baker, James MacPhee, Debra Salisbury, Robert J. Wooster  
Curator—Frank T. Meninno*

## The Station Master -President Deborah MacPhee

### A YEAR OF GREAT EVENTS!

The Society has many wonderful and interesting events planned for 2011. Come, enjoy, and learn something new at a Society event!

In January, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade National History Day projects are displayed. The students have an opportunity to discuss their projects with current and former Social Studies teachers. During the month of February, the Society will be closed for renovation. In the spring, we will hold a grand reopening celebration! The much anticipated Chowder and Chatter evening is held at the Southeastern Regional High School on March 31. If you would like to attend this event, please complete the form located in this newsletter. Ken Martin will hold several bottle and can drives during the year. The bottle and can drives held in May, July, and October will benefit the restoration of the building. Kids' Discovery, which is held in June, is a wonderful event for all ages. Interesting historic walks and lectures are the highlights of this event. If you are thinking of selling some of your treasures, our yard sale in September is an event you don't want to miss. October brings us the Spooky Hay Ride. This event is enjoyed by children and adults alike. Local historian Ed Hands delights riders with spooky tales of Easton. One of our favorite children's events is Train Day, which is held in November. We invite all train enthusiasts to the Station to enjoy storytelling, activities, songs, and many more exciting activities. In December, the year's events come to a close with the Holiday Festival weekend. At this event, you can pick up some wonderful holiday gifts and enjoy some holiday cheer!

There are several additional special events being planned for this year. For more information about these and other Society events, please visit our website at [www.eastonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.eastonhistoricalsociety.org).

In addition to the events mentioned above, the Society also has a monthly open house. The monthly open house is held on the second Sunday of each month from 1 PM to 5 PM. In recognition of Mother's Day, the May open house will be held on the third Sunday.

If you are interested in volunteering at any of these events or at the Society, please contact the Society.

I look forward to seeing you at one of the upcoming events or open houses.

**Have you checked out Patch.com for the Easton Historical fact of the Week?**

### Curator's Corner - Curator / Caretaker Frank T. Meninno

At long last we have begun the restoration of the Women's Waiting Room. The work involves completely emptying the room, stripping the ceiling of the old paint, repairing any of the woodwork, patching the plaster walls, and finally refinishing the surfaces with an oil finish on the ceiling and paint on the walls. Tim Hurley will be doing the work. The Men's Waiting Room received this treatment about 21 years ago and the results were wonderful. This work is made possible because of our members' generous donations towards the cost of restoration projects. Sometimes projects like these are a long time coming, but the reward is well worth the wait.

Just as importantly we have the opportunity to re-evaluate the best use of space before we re-assemble the room. A team of volunteers will be looking at what we want to do, and how we want to present items from our collections. It is exciting to give the place a new look, but it is more important to keep the museum a user-friendly and welcoming place. Hopefully we will open sometime in March. Until then, I hope you look forward to seeing the restoration. We look forward to seeing you!

## IN MEMORIAM

The Society notes with sadness the passing of Ralph Armstead. Ralph was instrumental in the early development, and the subsequent success, of Southeastern Regional Vocational Technical High School in South Easton. He served as Easton's representative on the School Committee there for thirty-seven years. What most people didn't realize was Ralph's quiet generosity towards his fellow citizens and students. If Ralph heard that a student could not afford safety equipment such as work shoes, a pair would somehow find its way to the student. The same was true for anyone in need of tools. Many Easton students benefited from his support for vocational education.

Sympathy is extended to the family of Robert West of Middleboro. Bob and his family lived on Center Street for many years and were active in the Society.

We also extend our sympathy to the family of June Brenner Judson, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Jacob Brenner and cousin of David and Robert Brooks. June was an actress-director who nurtured for decades Boston theater talent. She established Theatre-In-Process, a laboratory-workshop in the early 1980's to give emerging playwrights a place to stage readings and receive audience feedback. Later she would help the author incorporate the feedback into the script. Also she played wide-ranging roles in the region's theater community during her 55-year career. On May 3rd, 1987, as part of the Bicentennial Celebration, a play produced and directed by June was presented at Stonehill College- "The Other Boston Tea Party". Arrangements for this outstanding performance were made by the Abraham Brooks Family, Easton Historical Commission, Easton Historical Society, and Stonehill College.

## Ames Free Library-Easton's Public Library Wins Prestigious National Award!

The Ames Free Library was selected as one of three finalists in the 2011 Best Small Library in America competition by *Library Journal* and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The annual award is given "to encourage and showcase the exemplary work of libraries serving populations under 25,000." The Ames Free Library will receive a \$5,000 grant as well as membership and conference costs for two library representatives to attend a gala reception at the Public Libraries Association conference in Philadelphia in 2012.

"We are honored to help recognize these innovative libraries, which have excelled at understanding and meeting the needs of their communities," said Jill Nishi, Deputy Director of U.S. Libraries and Special Initiatives at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "They serve as remarkable examples of how libraries can develop and sustain the critical services their communities need, including high-quality technology and Internet access." This is, in fact, the first time a library in Massachusetts has received this prestigious award.

Director Madeline Miele Holt, together with the Board of Directors, and the Staff of the Ames Free Library, would like to take this opportunity to thank the ever-generous people of Easton who have come to the library, participated in its programs, donated both countless volunteer hours and hard-earned cash, and imbued this gracious old building with a vibrancy and community energy that allowed it to be recognized for this national honor.

## Spring Bottle and Can Drive

Our spring bottle drive will be held on Saturday, May 14th, from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Railroad Station. The drive will be held rain or shine! All clean Massachusetts returnable bottles and cans are welcomed. For pickup of large amounts please call Ken at 508-238-2185. Proceeds will be used towards further restoration of the building. Thank you!

# OLD HOUSES and BUILDINGS of EASTON

141 Howard Street



The house at 141 Howard Street is one that has a very interesting history. The house, whose foundation may have been laid around 1810, was located on the very outskirts of Easton close to the Norton line. It went through various owners during the 20th century. Early in the century, a man named Ruddy owned the property which contained the house and about thirty acres of land. Ruddy lost the property on a foreclosure. It was purchased by Isadore Coffin who paid off the mortgage. Coffin sold the house and about six acres of land to Charles Bellman for \$300. This parcel has an amazing

history. Bellman lost the place on a foreclosure and Eric Anderson bought the property for \$1.00 on February 17, 1925. Later the property was sold to Mazie McDermott, then to Russell Murray, then to Arthur Hassett and Robert Wright. In 1968 Gerald Barg purchased the property.

The house changed drastically over the years with many additions being constructed. However, its most dramatic transformation and fame came during the Murray ownership from 1946-1966. Murray, who owned the Raynham Dog Track and became very successful in racing ventures, immediately built a huge in ground pool some sixty feet long by twenty feet wide. He also built a tennis court, horse stables, a corral, and kennels to house the greyhounds he raced in nearby Raynham. He also built another house on the property as well as a shop and seven garages attached to an old barn.

Russell Murray was best known as a backer of soon to be world heavyweight champion boxer Rocky Marciano. Rocky was an up and coming boxer when Murray acquired the property and he evidently took quite an interest in Rocky. In fact, Murray transformed his estate into a training facility for Rocky. This quiet place on the edge of the Hockomock Swamp became Rocky's training camp for a number of years.

To accommodate the heavyweight champ, Murray built an indoor boxing ring inside a barn-like structure. He also provided the freshest meat by building a butcher shop and freezer house on the property. When a party was held, the bandstand from the Raynham Dog Track was dragged onto the property and used as a cabana. Local fighters such as the late Vincent and Kenneth Hurley were often Rocky's sparring partners. Eventually Rocky found a new training facility and the property returned to its former use.

The main house had many rooms added onto it. However the original 1810 fireplace was intact although not used. On its fireplace itself could be found the autographs of such luminaries as Joe Louis, Primo Carnera, The Angel, Jackie Gleason, Tony Galento and of course Rocky Marciano. There were other names as well but no record was ever taken of them all. Can you imagine these stars coming to Howard Street? Unfortunately a fire in 1975 caused the fireplace to be torn down. It is not known if the autographs survived.

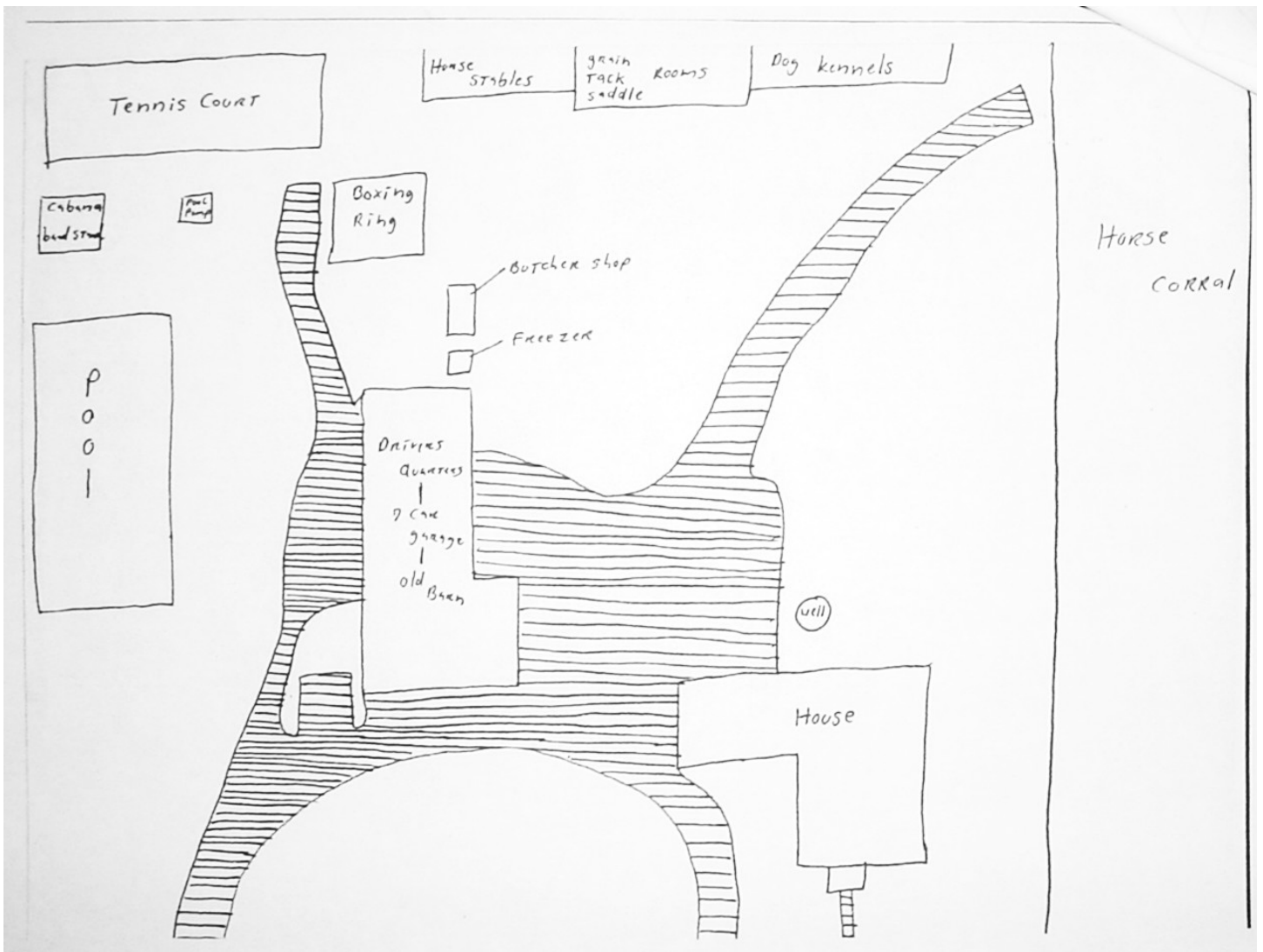
As you can see the property at 141 Howard Street can claim a unique spot in not only our local history, but in our national history as well. Rocky retired from fighting in 1956 as the only undefeated heavyweight champion. He may have been the "Brockton Blockbuster", but clearly he honed his skills in sleepy post war Easton!

Postscript: The property at 141 Howard Street is now for sale. The house has been altered from its original configuration, and some of the adjoining property has been sold and developed. A few of the out-buildings remain.



Left, two great sportsmen—retired undefeated heavyweight champion Rocky Marciano (L) and John S. Ames, Jr. pose at Springhill, 1958. Photo from Charlton Ames.

Bottom photo, the layout of the property during the ownership of Russ Murray. The drawing clearly shows the house, boxing ring, freezer and slaughter houses and the pool. It also shows the locations of the horse stables and dog kennels, which were an important part of Murray's career in racing. The boxing ring building still stands on the property.



### RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Easton Town Reports from the 1980's and 1990's, from Nancy Cohenno; three Southeastern Regional High School yearbooks, 1979,1981,1984, O.A.H.S. Class of 1929 50th reunion trivet, a hat box from Edgar's of Brockton, and an early basketball team photo, from Priscilla Almquist-Olsen; Photo of a class play by the O.A.H.S. Class of 1932, photo of American Legion show, from Virginia Hinchcliffe; Yankee Hostess memo pad, from Ron Somerville; photo of the workers at the Ames Handle Shop, circa 1890, from Mr. and Mrs. Harold Gershman; laminated full page ad from Sundell's, circa 1950, Laminated Green Flyers from the 1950's and 1960's, assorted books, from Russ Meninno; Clifford "Kippy" Grant's World War II uniform with whites and his hat, and a collection of old books, from Eleanor Grant; 1946 Eastoner yearbook from Joyce Neimi; a double faced clock that hung in the lobby of the North Easton Savings Bank office on Main Street, from North Easton Savings Bank with thanks to Priscilla Almquist-Olsen; primitive painting of the schooner Governor Oliver Ames, undated, from former State Representative and Mrs. John S. Ames, III; Photo of Boy Scouts with Fred Stone, Photo of an Ames Company Outing dated 1934, Photo of the 1953 testimonial dinner held for Fire Chief Bailey, with George and Noni Stone, Map of the South Shore area, 1941, newspapers from the Blizzard of 1978, from Jeanette Stone Picchi; 309 items from the Sylvio and Signe DiPasqua collection, from Lois DiPasqua; monetary donations from Cathy Adler and Ellen Dehm, Jim Carlino and Peter Simpson, Easton Garden Club, "Give with Liberty", Janet Linehan, Alice McCarthy, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Misiewicz,

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

**Volunteers Needed!**

Would you be able to work at the Station some Wednesdays during April or May from 9:30 A.M. to noon? During the winter many boxes of printed materials are being sorted and placed in appropriate categories. In the spring the material needs to be placed in the proper files. If you can help please call Hazel Varella at 508-238-3614 or Frank Meninno at 508-238-7774. Thank you very much!

**A special note...**

Deep appreciation to Jan Davis for granting the Society permission to reproduce for educational purposes her "The Coloring Book of Easton"; Appreciation to Emmy's Hair Salon of South Easton for two Holiday gift baskets for the Holiday raffle; Appreciation to David Kaufman for allowing us to display part of his railroad collection for Train Day, including a terrific engineering drawing of a locomotive.

### Restoration Work Gets Underway!

At the time of this printing, work has begun on restoring the former Women's Waiting Room and front entrance. The room and front entrance have been cleared of items, and the ceiling is being stripped. Early indications are that the wood is in very good condition and should finish very nicely.



**Junior Girl Scout Troop 65049 Visits Easton Historical Society**

Clockwise from top left: Troop 65049 with Curator Frank Meninno and Troop Leader Lori Prew; an attentive audience learning about their town’s great history; Isabel Refford, Lauren McNamee, Madison Dudek, Maddie Kullen and Aprille Gangi “modeling” period clothing worn by the Tisdale and Copeland families; Maddie Kullen and Aprille Gangi with Victorian era ladies hat and a field bonnet.

**2011 CHOWDER AND CHATTER RESERVATION FORM**

Mail no earlier than March 14th

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) \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Attendees \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



The child's boxing gloves on the left represent an Easton tie to the Brockton Blockbuster, Rocky Marciano. These gloves were given to Easton native Tom De Witt by his aunt, Dorothy (Hatchfield) Di-auto. She worked as a physical therapist in Brockton, and evidently worked on Rocky at times. The gloves, which at one time were autographed by Rocky, were given to Tom as a gift from his aunt when he was about ten years old. Tom has now donated these to our Society. Thank you, Tom, for a great piece of history and a nice story too.

Read more "Rocky" history inside!

Address changing? Please tell us!

Address Service Requested

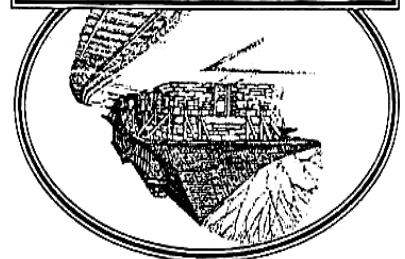
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Old Colony Railroad Station



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