

EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TRAIN TRACKS



Volume 12, Issue 3

Spring 2012

CALENDAR

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

Sunday, March 11th, Set your clocks! Daylight Savings Time begins!

Sunday, March 11th, Open House, 1-5 p.m.

Friday, April 6th, Passover begins at sunset.

Sunday, April 8th, Easter Sunday. No open house today.

Thursday, April 12th, annual "Chowder and Chatter" evening, 6:00 p.m. At Southeastern Regional High School, Foundry Street, South Easton. Presented by Lee and Kevin Williams. Reservation form is located inside back cover!

Sunday, April 15th, Open House, 1-5 p.m.

Saturday, May 5th, Ken Martin Memorial Bottle and Can Drive, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Rain or shine!

Sunday, May 13th, Happy Mother's Day! No open house today.

Sunday, May 20th, Open House, 1-5 p.m.

Monday, May 28th, Memorial Day

Looking ahead...

Open houses on June 10, July 8, and August 12th.

We are available for open houses and tours all summer. Give us a call for availability!

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.

Digital History

At long last, your Society is making the leap into the Digital Age! Thanks to our members generous support, we are beginning the long process of transitioning our collections into digital format. Our recent purchase of a computer and high resolution scanner gives us the tools to take on this project. There are several benefits for doing this important work:

- ⇒ Digitizing allows for archival preservation in a format that can be readily accessed and easily updated as new technologies become available;
- ⇒ It allows for less handling of fragile or rare items;
- ⇒ We will have the ability to send information to researchers over the web, which is a growing need;
- ⇒ We will have a better presence on the web;
- ⇒ Requests for copies of photos, etc. can be more easily filled without re-exposing the original papers and photos to damaging intense light from a copier;
- ⇒ We can keep copies of our collection in multiple locations as a protection against disasters.

We have begun to post a Topical Guide to our collections on our web site. The data comes from work done by our research committee: Barbara Beech, Joanne England, Ed Hands, Fran Holland, Judge Leon J. Lombardi, Frank Meninno, Maureen Raymo, Judy Sabin, Hazel Varella, and Jean Visnauskis. Dan Paré has been instrumental in preparing the listing for publication. More topics are in process, and the list will be updated periodically.

Digitizing will better position us to serve the next generation of historians. So sit back, watch us grow, and enjoy the ride into the future!

*The Easton Historical Society Newsletter "Train Tracks" is published quarterly by the Easton Historical Society.
Officers: President—Kenneth J. Michel, 1st Vice President—Edmund C. Hands, 2nd Vice President—David Ames, Jr.
Treasurer—Nancy DeLuca, Recording / Corresponding Secretary—Hazel L. Varella
Directors—Patricia Baker, Melanie-Jane L. Deware, Judge Leon J. Lombardi, Debra Salisbury, Robert J. Wooster
Immediate Past President and Director—Deborah MacPhee Curator—Frank T. Meninno*

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

One of the great things about working at the Society is meeting people. Once in a while someone comes into your life who is particularly memorable. The late Ken Martin was just such a person. Ken was a great guy, hard working, always interested in the affairs of the town, and especially in what was going on at the Society. He often appeared in his work clothes for a visit, just coming in after a day at work, and not looking his best! He may not have been the most eloquent of speakers, but he had a unique way of voicing his comments. His general countenance could easily make someone overlook him, and his quiet, shy demeanor often times hid him in a crowd. One had to take the time to get to know him, but once done, he was a friend for life.

Ken was a true friend. He was my right hand man, always willing to help in some way without needing to be asked. Sometimes he would stay late to help clean up, empty the coffee pot, or put things away. Sometimes I would show up at the Society to find Ken outside performing some type of work on the grounds. Sometimes, he would do something when no one was there, and wait to see if I noticed! When local news was made, he would always stop in with the latest newspaper so we could discuss the issue. He would call me during the evening to do the same, or tell me about something he heard. I went with him to several hearings and meetings, and joined him at the "Chowder and Chatter" dinners. We spent many hours together during the bottle and can drives that he ran so well. I was always impressed by how well-read he was, how up-to-date he was about things that could impact the Society, and he was a good story teller too!

Above all, we had many conversations about our respective churches, something Ken felt very strongly about. Perhaps his life, his beliefs, and his legacy can best be summed up with the following from his family:

We would like to share an analogy, drawn from our Christian faith, during these weeks of concern and support from Ken's friends.

To those who didn't know Ken, he might be compared to a rusty and broken scooter, or a tarnished piece of jewelry, not given a second look..

Through the wake we heard so many stories of the constant kindness and caring things.

Ken did for everyone he knew. He used every talent God gave him.

It's impossible for us to see the true value of people, only God knows the beauty of each soul and He has called home our shiny jewel of great value, our sparkling valuable scooter to his heavenly home.

Scoot to your reward Ken!

Always helpful, never judgmental. A lesson for us all to live by. Thank you, Ken.

Ken Martin Memorial Bottle and Can Drive

In September 1987, Ken Martin held the first bottle and can drive to benefit the Society. With Ed Hands and the late Ken Jackson forming Ken's Krack Krew, a truckful of bottles and cans was collected and over \$100 was raised. The October 1987 newsletter announced the result of Ken's "great idea." In this 25th year of bottle and can drives, the Society announces that we will continue this tradition in Ken's memory.

The Society will hold its spring bottle and can drive on Saturday, May 5th, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The drive will be held rain or shine at our museum, the former Old Colony Railroad Station, 80 Mechanic Street, North Easton. If you have a large amount of bottles and cans or are unable to drop off your donation, pickup may be arranged by calling 508-238-7774. Sorry, we cannot accept items for recycling, only those items with a refundable deposit. All proceeds will benefit the Easton Historical Society.

Back in 1987 this was an important fundraiser, and today, this traditional event continues to provide the Society with an important source of income. Thank you for 25 years of support!

In Memorium

Ken Martin, a lifelong resident of Easton and a special friend of the Society, passed away as a result of injuries received in an accident mentioned in the previous newsletter. Many of you know he ran our bottle drives for many years. Ken did much more than that. He regularly helped to clean up after open houses and events, did a variety of yard work including a badly needed cutting of our shrubs, trimmed trees, and helped to clear snow. When a visitor was nearby, Ken would be quick to join the conversation and offer his knowledge or point out a photo to someone. He took a particular interest in the renovation of the Ames Shovel Shop buildings in North Easton as well as the proposed South Coast Rail Project. He was a constant presence at the Society and that presence is missed. A member of the Oliver Ames High School Class of 1963, Ken also served his country proudly during the Vietnam War as a Seabee, and worked for many years as a member of the Easton Department of Public Works. We offer our sympathy to his siblings Ernest Martin of Duvall, WA., Emily Pound of Norton, Myrtle Blaisdell of Brockton, and Doug Martin and his wife Sheila of Easton. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews that were very special to him. Ken was the brother of the late Richie Martin.

Fred Stone, a lifelong Easton resident, passed away in November. He was a 1953 graduate of Oliver Ames High School and a Korean War veteran. At one time he was a truck driver for Simpson Spring and later worked security for the Stonehill College Campus Police. Our sympathy is extended to his daughter Deborah Rogers of North Attleboro, his sister Jeannette Picchi of Easton, his brother Robert Stone of Easton, granddaughter Lindsay Rogers of North Attleboro, and several nieces and nephews including retired Easton fire chief Thomas Stone. He was the brother of the late George Stone.

John M. "Jack" Luke, who died November 23rd, thirty-eight days after his beloved wife Judy died, was an OAHS graduate of the Class of 1954. A graduate of Northeastern University and a brilliant engineer, he worked on components of the Space Program including a guidance system based of Spherical Triangles. His Highland Cattle on Elm Street were a special attraction for many years. Involved in Historical Society activities from mowing the lawn in its early history to helping with research in the latter part of the 1990's, he was a strong supporter. Our sympathy is expressed to his six children: John, Mike, David, Melinda, Steve, and our Past President Deborah.

The Society also offers our condolences to our President Ken Michel upon the passing of his father, Ralph K. "Ken" Michel. Mr. Michel, an Easton resident for 53 years, was a World War II veteran. He was also an excellent athlete, competing as a welterweight boxer in the Navy, and later as a fast pitch softball player. Our sympathy is expressed to surviving children Ken, John, Patrick, Judy, Kevin and Dennis, ten grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The families of Ken Martin, Fred Stone, and John M. and Judy Luke have asked for donations to be made to the Society's Memorial Fund. The Society expresses its sincere thanks and deep appreciation to the Martin, Stone and Luke families, and to those who have contributed in their memory.

Donations in memory of Ken Martin were received from American Legion George S. Shepard Post 7; Benson Enterprises; James Carlino and Peter Simpson; Sandra Conant; Lois DiPasqua; Brian and Tara Foxx; Ethel Gardner; Robert and Virginia Hinchliffe; John and Jean Kent; Douglas and Sheila Martin; MCB-12-1968-1969 Sea Bees through Robert K. Williams (Ken's unit during the Vietnam War); Alice McCarthy; Frank and Anne-Marie Meninno; Barbara Miller; John Moran; Morse Insurance Agency; William and Marilyn Mowatt; Joan Payne; Jeanette Picchi; Thomas and Judith Sabin; David and Hazel Varella; Wayne Hill, in memory of Ken and other deceased members of the Oliver Ames High School Class of 1963. Donations in memory of John M. and Judy Jackman Luke were received from Patricia Baker; James Carlino and Peter Simpson; Miriam Jackson; Judge and Mrs. Leon J. Lombardi; Frank and Anne-Marie Meninno; Barbara Holbrook Read; Thomas and Judith Sabin; David and Hazel Varella; Edwin and Evelyn White. Donations in memory of Fred Stone were received from Patricia Baylor; Frank and Anne-Marie Meninno; The Stone Family Living Trust, Douglas and Deborah Stone Trustees.

Addendum to “In the best of Families”

Last November, Professor James Kenneally gave a talk on a strike by handlers at the Ames Shovel Company. After that presentation, sharp-eyed Maureen Raymo spotted an interesting item in “News Notes of 1901” published in the September 1, 1951 Brockton Enterprise. It stated that a workman from the Ames plant had been discharged for refusing to teach a foreigner how to polish shovels, resulting in a sympathetic strike of over thirty polishers. In the company files there is a letter (Letterbook, vol. 21, page 825, file D50) written August 27, 1901 to a Boston firm stating that the company was doing all it could to fill their rush order but for the last two or three days there had been a strike of polishers, however, the men are going back to work tomorrow and the goods will be sent as soon as possible. Two different newspapers reported that the walkout began on August 26th when Gustus Johnson was fired for refusing to teach a “Polander” how to polish shovels. The other polishers struck stating they would not return to work until Johnson was rehired. On August 27th a committee of polishers met with President Hobart Ames and “some agreement was made.” The men returned to work on the 28th but the newspapers do not mention if Johnson was among them, nor is there any indication in company papers as the Time Books for this period are among those that were never retained. Another mystery in Ames Company labor relations. (See Brockton Times, August 26, 28; Brockton Enterprise August 26. The only mention in the Boston Globe was on August 28 when it reported “disagreement...over some minor details of work” have been settled and employees are returning to work.)

A Gift of China

The Society has on display pieces of a Minton China set that belonged to Oliver Ames, Jr. An article in our April 1989 newsletter by Ken Jackson details how we came about receiving that gift, and it is worth repeating here:

In the year 1925, Nellie L. Jermolovich was a student in the seventh grade of the Easton Public Schools. In that year, Nellie commenced part-time employment during the school year and full time employment during the summer with the Ames Free Library. Nellie worked under the supervision and tutelage of Miss Mary Lamprey, who had commenced her services with the library in 1891. Miss Lamprey and Miss Jermolovich were employees of the library during those years in which Mrs. Mary Ames Frothingham was a board member and the president of the library. It was Mrs. Frothingham who sponsored Nellie’s education at Simmons College where Nellie earned a degree in Library Science and in which field, upon graduation, she commenced employment with the Children’s Division of the Detroit Public Library.

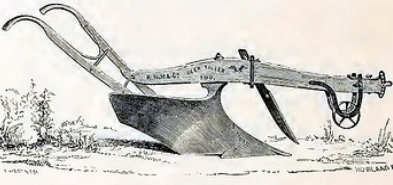
Miss Lamprey, in 1911/1912, did negotiate for and did purchase in Groton, New Hampshire, a farm. Groton was the natal town of Miss Lamprey’s father, Maitland C. Lamprey, who had become principal of the Easton High School in 1877. Miss Jermolovich was often a guest at that farm in Groton.

In 1938, Nellie married Mr. Richard D. Minnich, also a librarian, a graduate of Ann Arbor. Coincidentally, Mr. and Mrs. Minnich served for some years in the library at Easton, Pennsylvania. In 1963 the Minnichs purchased the farm of Miss Lamprey which purchase included the furnishings of the farm house. The chinaware gifted to the Society was a part of those household goods.

A note, in the hand of Miss Mary Lamprey, records: the blue white breakfast set belonged to Oliver Ames.

Thank you much, Nellie, for sharing this gift with the Society.

AMES PLOW COMPANY,
MANUFACTURERS OF
Agricultural Implements & Machines
DEALERS IN
Grass, Field, Garden and Flower Seeds,
FERTILIZERS, ETC.



SOLE MARKERS OF
The Gemine Eagle Plows,
Prouty & Mears' Center Draft Plows,
Sessions & Knox's Patent Hard Steel Plows,
Hakes' Improved Swivel Plows,
The American Hay Tedder,
Burt's Self-Adjusting Horse Rake,
Harrington's Combined Seed Sower and Cultivator,
French's Patent Cultivator,
Little Giant Wheel Jacks,
Ross' Patent Lawn Mowers, etc.

WAREHOUSES:
Quincy Hall, Boston. 53 Beekman Street, New York.

FACTORIES:
Prescott Street, Worcester, Mass.
AND AYER, MASS.

The Ames Plow Company

The last issue of "Train Tracks" featured photos of a recently restored Ames tip cart. That article prompted Judy King to ask about the history of the Ames Plow Company.

Following the War of 1812 a period of new settlement began as the frontier was pushed further and further west. The gold rushes that followed created even more demand for shovels and related items that were needed to establish new settlements. In 1855 the Ames family had begun taking an interest in railroads, bringing a branch of the Stoughton line as far as North Easton to serve the increasing shipping needs of their growing company. The family, particularly Oakes and his brother Oliver 2nd, were well known to Americans as two of the leading Industrialists in America before the Civil War. The Ames Shovel Company, already recognized as the leader in its field by that time, was providing Union troops with shovels. Clearly there was an opportunity for the Ames family to utilize their position and expertise, as well as their already extensive distribution network, to add new products that would complement the offerings of the shovel company.

One company in particular caught the attention of the Ameses. Nourse and Mason of Worcester, Massachusetts had been producing plows and related items for over a decade. The company's Eagle Plow was immensely popular with farmers and had a reputation of being a high quality implement, something that would certainly be attractive to the quality-focused Ames family. Sometime before the Civil War, the Ames family purchased the company and renamed it the Ames Plow Company. For a number of years the title included the by-line "Successors to Nourse and Mason." The purchase of this company, now identified with the Ames shovels and tools so familiar to Americans, was a natural progression in the growth of the shovel company.

The Ames Plow Company manufacturing was done in a very large factory near downtown Worcester. Soon business offices were opened in New York and Boston, and another factory was opened in Ayer, Massachusetts. The Boston location was in Quincy Market. The company product line was expanded to include a number of innovative and improved items that would benefit both established farms, and new farms being planted in frontier towns. Items offered were different types of plows, hay rakes, wagons, feed and vegetable cutters, cider presses, ice cutting tools, carts, and wagons. Hand tools for maintaining these items were also manufactured by the company. Business grew rapidly and product offerings continued to increase. Many items could be purchased in a variety of sizes, so as commercial farms grew they could purchase equipment capable of supporting their increasing needs, while "gentlemen" farmers could purchase the same high quality item in a much smaller scale for themselves.

Eventually competition from Sears, Roebuck and others began to erode market share. The company moved operations to a newer facility in Framingham, Massachusetts before 1900 and renamed itself the Ames Implement and Seed Company, which signified a fundamental change to its customer base—no longer competing for the industrial side of the business; the company now focused on the retail business aimed at the homeowner. At some point around the First World War the company ceases to exist. And so the Ames Plow Company came and went, a necessary and natural extension of the Ames Shovel and Tool Company at a time of great expansion in American history.

By the way the Ames Plow Company name still exists. In the basement of Quincy Hall, Boston, is the Ames Plow Tavern, which features as part of their décor an Ames Plow Company plow!

It's "Chowder and Chatter" Time!

The twelfth annual "Chowder and Chatter" evening, generously funded by Lee and Kevin Williams, will be held Thursday, April 12th at 6 P.M. at the Southeastern Regional High School, 250 Foundry Street, South Easton. After enjoying a delicious meal prepared and served by Chef Paula Kfoury and her students, the traditional panel discussion will occur. However, instead of featuring the past events and accomplishments of our members, the focus will be 2012. In many ways the activities of this year will have a long-range effect on our community, and the Society has invited four of the major facilitators to share their thoughts and expectations for this year. Panelists will include David Ames, Jr., Easton Garden Club member Nancy Cohenno, Chair of the Board of Selectmen Colleen Corona, and Grange / Lions Club member Avery Lee Williams. The moderator will be Edmund Hands. Plan to learn about 2012 and enjoy this special evening.

The registration form for this evening is directly below. Registration forms MUST BE POSTMARKED MARCH 19TH OR LATER and mailed to Hazel Varella at the address on the form. An acknowledgement of your donation will be sent. If you have any questions, please contact Hazel at 508-238-3614.



2012 CHOWDER AND CHATTER RESERVATION FORM

Mail on or after March 19th!

Please use this form to reserve your seat for the April 12th "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 the 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 _____

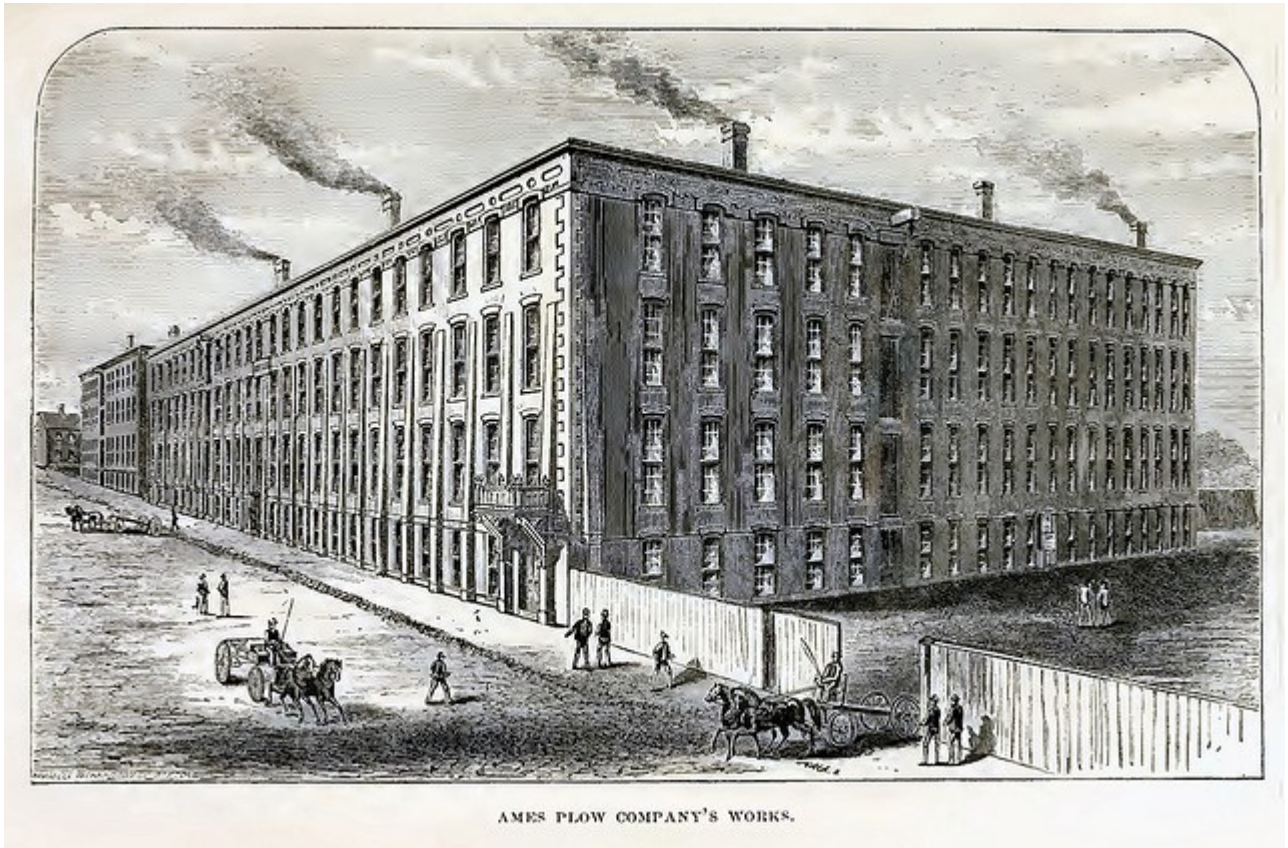
Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____ Email address _____

Number of Seats Requested (limit of 4) _____ Donation \$ _____

Names of Attendees (include yourself) _____



Ames Plow Company factory in Worcester, MA.

Photo courtesy Worcester Illustrated, James Arthur Ambler, 1875.

Address changing? Please tell us!

Address Service Requested

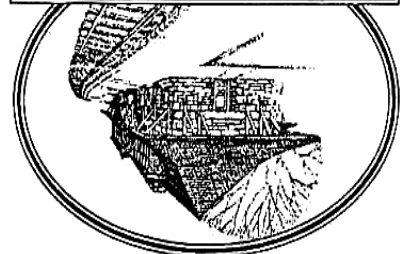
NON-PROFIT ORG.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
NO. EASTON, MA
02356
PERMIT NO. 25

www.eastonhistoricalsociety.org

508-238-7774

P.O. Box 3, 80 Mechanic Street
North Easton MA 02356

Old Colony Railroad Station



EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY