

EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# TRAIN TRACKS



## CALENDAR

*Annual Meeting—Tuesday, June 1st, Richardson-Olmsted School, 7:30 P.M.*

*Sunday, June 13th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M., Appreciation for Ken Martin*

*Monday, June 14th, Flag Day*

*Sunday, June 20th, Father's Day*

*Sunday, July 4th, Independence Day*

*Sunday, July 11th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M.*

*Sunday, August 8th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M.*

*Monday, September 6th, Labor Day*

*Sunday, September 12th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M.*

## Summer Doings

Welcome, lazy, hazy days of summer! After a record-setting cold winter and a soggy spring, we are all ready for a nice stretch of summer weather. Many of us have our vacations scheduled, our summer retreats opened, and our beloved Red Sox once again playing great ball.

The Historical Society will be busy during the summer planning the events for next fall and winter. One thing that comes immediately to mind is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the United States "Miracle on Ice" Olympic gold medal winning hockey team. This deserves special notice here because of the great goaltending performance of Easton's own Jim Craig. Our heroes deserve a fond remembrance of this accomplishment, and we hope to put together something special.

We have received notice of the possibility of receiving several special gifts. It is a bit too early to say too much because details need to be worked out. Hopefully we will have a special announcement or two in upcoming newsletters detailing some very exciting events!

Having company this summer? Looking for something to do? Please be sure to join us during our summer open houses. We will be keeping a regular schedule during the summer months. Even if the weather is hot, the punch and the discussion will be refreshing! Please be sure to share your history with your family and friends. As always, admission is free!

*Easton Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly by the Easton Historical Society.*

*Officers:*

- President—Frank T. Meninno*
- 1st Vice President—Ken Michel*
- 2nd Vice President, Curator—Paul Berry*
- Treasurer—Patricia Baker*
- Recording Secretary—Hazel Varella*
- Corresponding Secretary—Curtis Chase*
- Director—Dot Berry*
- Director—Ed Hands*
- Director—Gary Uzdavinis*
- Editor—Frank T. Meninno*

## Annual Meeting Update

Our annual meeting, originally scheduled for May 26th, has been re-scheduled for Tuesday, June 1st. It will be held at the Richardson-Olmsted school Teachers Room, at 7:30 P.M. Robert "Buddy" Wooster has prepared a wonderful program entitled "Langwater". He has put a great deal of time and effort into it. We are very appreciative of Buddy's willingness to do this for our members and friends, and we look forward to seeing it!

## The Station Master

President Frank T. Meninno

Dear members and friends, and sponsors, I want to personally thank you for supporting your Society the past two months. Our “Chowder and Chatter” dinner about Easton legends and scandals was sold out! Panelists Duncan Oliver, Hazel Varella and Ed Hands kept our attention with a variety of stories. Thank you to Lee and Kevin Williams of Advest, Inc.

for sponsoring this important event. Thanks also to Mary Ryan for videotaping this program.

Professor Chet Raymo led us on a very informative and humorous walk along “The Path” made famous by the book of the same name. I can say I certainly learned a lot. Doctor James Kenneally was equally informative in his discussion on Daylight Savings Time. He

spoke of the situations leading up to creating it, and the groups who took various sides for or against. It is amazing that something we take for granted caused such tensions only a short while ago!

Work is continuing on getting quotes to update the basement and heat at the Station.

In closing, I wish you all a safe and enjoyable summer!

## The Curator’s Corner

Curator Paul Berry

Greetings! The research committee wrapped up another season of identifying, sorting, and filing items from our collection. This is tedious work as it requires going over each item to be sure we can be aware of it’s significance to Easton. We had a very dedicated team this year. They routinely gave up their Tuesday mornings to help out. In

return, the Society made good gains in properly identifying items in our collection. These items have been placed in archival storage and can now be easily accessed for research. Special thanks go out to Dot Berry, Barbara Beech, Hazel Varella, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Luke and their daughter Debbie, for donating many hours of their time to this project.

We will begin meeting again in the fall. If you can spare some time, and are interested in helping, please call the Station and leave a message. You will get lots of exposure to Easton’s great history ! You’ll also get stimulating conversation from your fellow researchers. The pace is leisurely, the company delightful, and the work rewarding. I hope you will consider joining us!

## Appreciation Day for Ken Martin

Please join us at our June open house as we recognize our friend, and member, Ken Martin for his public service. Ken has run our bottle drives for many years now, with little fanfare or public acknowledgement. Ken also runs bottle drives for other groups in town, freely giving his time and truck to benefit those groups. He was also a long time employee of the Town of Easton, and has recently retired.

Please be sure to stop by and join us on Sunday, June 13th, and thank Ken for his many years of service to the Town of Easton, and for his efforts in supporting us and other groups in the community.

## EASTON SUPERLATIVES!

A while back, we published a partial list of “Easton Superlatives”, the best, first, oldest, worst, etc. in Easton’s history. Shortly after, we received a letter asking for some history on some of those topics. Therefore, we are pleased to begin a series of these “superlatives” with this issue of Train Tracks.

### OLDEST LEAD MINE

Metals have played a huge role in Easton’s history, from supplying the earliest needs of the settlers to today’s foundries, and everything in between. However, England forbade the American Colonies to produce it’s own metal products; everything had to be imported from England, guaranteeing English control over the development of industry, firearms, and any movement towards independence. It also generated significant cash for the English at a time when they needed it to finance their various campaigns around the world. They also needed to pay for a costly war against France.

As early as 1716, an “iron mine” was being purchased north of Lincoln Street by Lieutenant James Leonard, who hailed from a family of great iron makers. This “mine” was actually a large deposit of bog iron, typically found in wet areas and streambeds around New England. Although bog iron was poor in quality, it gave the colonists their earliest hope of relief from English control of metal. This large deposit was found near Lincoln Spring. This find launched a number of iron furnaces in the Easton area, but it wasn’t the oldest, or first in the area. That distinction belongs to another type of mining activity.

The area between Washington Street and the Brockton line, now traversed by Elm Street Extension, was once known as the Leonard place, and the road known as the “Quaker Leonard Road”. A steel furnace had been built there about the time that the Revolutionary War had begun under the guidance of Jonathan “Quaker” Leonard, son of the aforementioned James. It continued and expanded, even though Jonathan had moved to Canton, Ma. The big news came around 1824, when it was announced that “lead ore” (galena) was supposedly discovered on the property. Chaffin, in his 1886 “History of Easton , Massachusetts”, notes that a company was formed to mine the ore. Lead may not seem too exciting to us, but it was an important part of the lives of these people. Besides being suitable for ammunition, is was necessary for plumbing, pumps, bearings, and the manufacture of pewter, an alloy of tin and lead. Lead has a low melting point, and could be refined very easily. The local availability of lead would be a real boon and moneymaker to the wise company of investors.

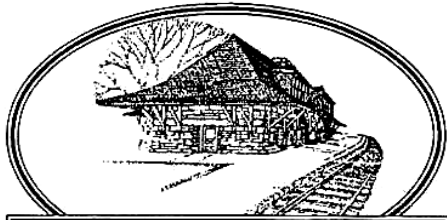
Shortly after the forming of the company, which Chaffin does not provide information on, digging began. This wasn’t as easy as mining surface deposits of bog iron. The ore was underground, meaning that a shaft had to be sunk. A great deal of money was spent, only to wind up with a “dismal hole in the ground” as Chaffin records. After the death of Joel White, who was killed in a premature powder explosion during blasting, the company disbanded, and the mine, abandoned. The location of the mine is placed north of the road by some sources, south of it by others. Perhaps a careful survey of the area may still reveal some vestiges of it.

There may have been another reason to try and develop a lead mine, even at the cost of up to two lives. Since Roman times, it was known that wherever lead was found, another more valuable metal was often found—silver! Was this the real cause of all the excitement of 1824? Perhaps only the Leonard family, ironmasters of their time, knew for sure!

Envelope from the Ross Heel Company, South Easton MA. Dated November 13th, 1900. The factory stood behind the old J. O. Dean Grain Mill, located at the north east corner of the intersection of Washington Street and Depot Street.



**EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



**Old Colony Railroad Station**

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