

EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TRAIN TRACKS



Volume 11, Issue 4

SUMMER 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 be closed until late May. Watch the local papers and our web site for details on our re-opening!

*Sunday, May 8th,
Happy Mother's Day!*

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

*Monday, May 30th,
Memorial Day.*

Sunday, June 12th, Open House, 1-5 P.M. Program TBD

*Tuesday, June 14th, Flag Day.
Remember to fly Old Glory!*

Sunday, June 19th, Happy Father's Day!

Tuesday, June 21st, First Day of Summer!

Monday, July 4th, Independence Day. Happy 235th Birthday!

Sunday, July 10th, Open House, 1-5 P.M. Family Discovery Day!

Sunday, August 14th, Open House, 1-5 P.M. Looking Down at Easton!

Looking ahead...

August / September Yard Sale

September 17th, Borderland State Park 100th Anniversary

September 24th, Historic Play

October 2nd, NRT Harvest Fair

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.

Change Is In the Wind

The Society is undergoing a few changes! First of all, Deborah and James MacPhee will be leaving town (and state!) to begin a new job opportunity in Seattle. Debi was the driving force that made the renovations at the Society possible. Her endless energy and tireless work resulted in a number of donations being made to fund this much needed project. The Society is deeply indebted to the MacPhees and we wish them the best on their new adventure.

North Easton is also undergoing change. Soon new owners will begin renovating the former Ames Shovel Shop buildings into very nice housing. More green space will also be created, enhancing the natural beauty in the area. Also coming up is the possible purchase of the former Governor Oliver Ames estate by the Trustees of Reservations. This exciting development would turn the property into a public park. As the Society is located midway between the two projects, we are anticipating playing an even greater role in being the focal point for meetings and tours that will further knowledge of our wonderful history. The Trustees will be seeking some Community Preservation funds at Town Meeting as a small part of the overall fundraising they are doing to purchase the property and provide an endowment to maintain it as well.

The next change is not so imminent, but may have a profound impact. The South Coast Rail Project, which would restore commuter rail service from Boston to Fall River and New Bedford, is considering using the railroad right of way that runs right through the heart of the North Easton Village Historic Landmark District. A recent Army Corp. of Engineers Draft Environmental Impact Report identified that line as the preferred route. The final report may not be issued until next year. Stay tuned!

*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

This will be the last time I write to you as President of the Easton Historical Society, a position I have been fortunate to hold since 2006. My family and I will start our next great adventure when we move to Seattle, WA. at the end of this school year. I wanted to take this opportunity to reminisce about some of the things that The Society has accomplished over the past five years.

I first became involved with The Society as an adult in August 2004 when my aunt, Hazel Varella, asked if I would temporarily serve as Treasurer. Up until that time, my experiences with The Society had been during my childhood in Easton. I had attended antique car shows and yard sales at the train station with my parents and siblings. I was humbled that she had asked me to dust off my banking skills and manage The Society's books. Looking back, accepting Hazel's invitation was one of the best decisions I have made!

My fondest recollections of the past five years involve all the truly great people I've had the opportunity to work with. I've learned most of what I know about the unique history of our town from fellow Board members Hazel Varella and Ed Hands, and curator Frank Meninno. All we have accomplished over the past few years would not have been possible without the energy, sense of humor, and dedication of these three and the other Board members: David Ames Jr., Daniel Amorim, Pat Baker, Karen Cacciapuoti, Nancy DeLuca, Jim MacPhee, Ken Michel, Andrew Salisbury, Debbie Salisbury, and Buddy Wooster.

Highlights in my mind include all the activities we have been able to bring our newest generation of historians, Easton's kids. I'll never forget Ed Hands dressed as a hobo for Train Day, tours of downtown during Kid's Discovery Day, Nancy DeLuca serving hot chocolate at the Spooky Hayride, and several Board members giving middle school students feedback on their History Day projects, which were then displayed at The Society.

We have had two special celebrations during my tenure with The Society. The Society turned 60 in 2008, and we held a truly grand Gala at Stonehill College that drew a large attendance from far and wide. More recently, in 2009, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Former Old Colony Railroad Station becoming The Society's home, complete with a rededication attended by members of the Ames and Parker Families.

I fondly remember some of our more traditional events like the Lee and Kevin Williams sponsored Chowder and Chatter and Open Houses every 2nd Sunday of the month featuring Frank's newest historical exhibit. Board meetings always seemed that little more special when we held them at The Station around Mrs. Frothingham's former dining room table. Each January, The Board would gather for our annual "off-site" planning meeting where we would reflect on what we had accomplished in the past year and plan an exciting new year of activities.

One of the accomplishments I am most pleased with is the restorations we have made to the Railroad Station, our historic H.H. Richardson building. These include replacing broken roof slates, replacing a copper downspout, updating the electrical system, and preparing to remorter the chimney. We are in the midst of our greatest endeavor to date, repairs to the ceiling, walls, and floor in the ladies waiting area. These repairs have been a key goal of mine and a long time coming, and they help ensure The Station will be in good condition for future generations.

I've had a great time serving The Society. My thanks and good wishes to the members of The Board of Directors and The Society members. If you find yourself in Seattle know that you are welcome to stop by to visit and catch up on the comings and goings of our town, Easton.

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

When it comes to doing fix up projects at home, a small improvement can sometimes become more involved than one expects. The same thing happens here too! The restoration project in the Women's Waiting Room began with the goal of refinishing the ceiling, which had been covered over with old white paint. Of course that meant emptying the room. That led to the possibility of sanding the hardwood floors and refinishing them. That in turn led to removing the bathroom fixtures (to redo the floor in there) which will lead to better fixtures being put in. Then we began to consider how best to use the space we have. That meant re-looking at all our furnishings, display cases, etc. See what I mean?

Of course, the work and effort required will be well worth it when the finished result is revealed. In the mean time we have discovered we will have a better opportunity to teach others about our building. For instance, the original stain color on the oak wainscoting has been uncovered, and will remain visible. The interior wood and molding differ depending on whether it is in the public areas as opposed to the private areas. When we pulled off the old boards once used to install seating, we discovered that the window trim was still extant, something I was sure was either removed to allow the seating installation or was never installed in the first place. Now the mystery may be to decide if the seating was original, or if it was added at a later date. We even found one old playing card, which boasted a design that might make it harder to play poker with a marked deck. Feel free to drop in and see what's new!

I would be completely remiss if I did not mention the absolute joy it has been to work with our outgoing President Deborah MacPhee. Since coming on board, she has been an unending supply of energy, enthusiasm and excellent ideas. She has been the driving force in moving the Society into new territory. Debi has been a good friend, understanding, always willing to listen to ideas, and has been very supportive of the many things we have accomplished in these past years. She will be missed, but her infectious enthusiasm and can-do attitude will continue to guide this Society for years to come. Best wishes to Debi, husband and Director James and their son Joe on their new adventure!

Where Did I Put Those Photos?

- Buddy Wooster is in the beginning stages of a documentary on the Great Flood of '68 (1968 that is). That is the flood caused by the bursting of the Flyaway Pond Dam. He is looking for photos of the flooding around Easton, especially the Flyaway Pond area and the areas down stream that were severely damaged by the torrent of water that was unleashed. Please contact the Society if you have any photos, film, or stories about that memorable event.
- During the restoration of the Station we became painfully aware of the lack of interior photos of our building. As a matter of fact, we do not have a single photo that shows what the interior of our building looked like as constructed. If anyone has any old photo albums, please check through them. Take time to unearth that box of pictures you always meant to sort. Perhaps a photo of a family embarking on a train trip, or of troops returning from one of the wars, might show a hint of the interior. Maybe one of your ancestors worked here and had their picture taken inside. If you think you might have such a photo (or, dare I say photos?) please contact the Society!
- The Town Clerk is looking for photos of our former Town Clerks. If you should have one, we would appreciate a copy to pass along.

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 the Society at 508-238-7774. Proceeds will be used towards framing some of our maps for display. Thank you!

OLD HOUSES and BUILDINGS of EASTON

Nehemiah Howard House

C. 1796—1935

In 1796, Nehemiah Howard, son of Dr. Abiel Howard, built the house at the northeast corner of Turnpike and Purchase Street. The intersection was known as Goward's Corner.

The house was built facing south. Its front door was in the center of the house, and the exterior was clapboarded and painted white. There was the usual large central chimney which probably handled as many as four to six fireplaces. There is an ell projecting from the north that has its own history. Edwin T. Goward said that he expected the ell was a part of Dr. Abiel Howard's house. That house stood a few feet east of this house, on the north side of the street and just over the line into West Bridgewater. Dr. Howard's married life was between the years 1737 and 1777. If this was indeed part of the house, then it was at the time one of the very oldest buildings standing. Chaffin, in the History of Easton, records the fact that school was taught part-time in Nehemiah Howard's house around 1770. If so, then the house may actually be older than was thought.

The Nehemiah Howard house was kept in very good repair. It remained in the family for five generations: Nehemiah, Asa, Horace Dean Howard, Mrs. Maria Goward, wife of Edwin T. Goward, and then their daughters Mrs. Carrie Neale and Mrs. Bertha M. Meyers.

The house has a small front porch, and true to its origins, still had a large barn as well as several other outbuildings. There was even a windmill that probably powered a water pump. Unfortunately, this fine example of New England architecture burned down in 1935.

Nehemiah Howard was an interesting man. He was born about 1740. During the Revolutionary War, the General Court of Massachusetts ordered that every seventh man sixteen or older would have to serve in the Continental Army. Easton divided all those eligible into groups of seven, called "classes" and each within the group was numbered, with number seven going off to war. One other option to serving was to offer payment for a man to serve in your place. It so happened that a group of six men including Nehemiah paid eight pounds to one Ephraim Smith to serve as their "seventh man". Smith served under Abner Hayward, confirmed in a letter dated February 20, 1777. Nehemiah later served on the local Committee of Correspondence, and helped in securing better clothing and shoes for the soldiers.



The Nehemiah Howard house as it appeared circa 1903. The photograph was taken by Webster W. Bolton, who at one time lived on Howard Street and took many photographs around Easton during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Two Historic Anniversaries

Many of you are probably aware that this is the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War. Of course, many Eastoners fought in that war, and forty-seven paid the ultimate sacrifice to preserve the Union. Over the next four years we will feature articles about Easton's involvement in the Civil War.

This is also the 125th anniversary of the publication of Chaffin's History of Easton. This book, which has long been the supreme reference for Easton's history, was an entire year in the making. We do not know how many were printed. However, a contemporary newspaper article stated that "it is a good thing the author is not counting on becoming wealthy from the sale of his work." A number of copies were given to the High School. Once in a while an original copy surfaces at the local antique stores, where the price can range from \$80-\$100 dollars. Of course, reprints are readily available from us at a much more reasonable cost!

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Material about O.A.H.S. activities, 1960-66, from Tom Constantine; 1931 Enterprise, from Robert Brooks; early postcard of Ames Free Library, from Gail Jackman Podlenski; table from Sandy's Clam Shack, from Ed Lomer (with restoration by Roger McNamara); "Easton Flyer" articles, from Jeffrey Carlson; "Chasing George", a narrative of the diary of George Shepard and the Free Soil Company on their Transit of the Plains from Gurnee, Illinois to Placerville, California, from March 25, 1850 to August 22, 1850, compiled and donated by M. Shepard Williams; VHS tapes of Easton events, from Lee Williams; Preservation magazines, and books on antique cars, from Wayne Legge; Edgar's Department Store box, matchbook cover, basketball photo, cookbook that belonged to Mrs. Lothrop, from Priscilla Almquist-Olsen, Esq.; WW II items belonging to Robert O. Carlson including his trunk, suitcase, uniform, hat, canteen, billy club, knapsack, photos, patches, training books, his high school diploma and class photo, Class of 1927 50th Anniversary book, 50th Anniversary of the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Lebanon Church, from Jeanne Ebert; Civil Defense Auxiliary badge from Gil Heino; a glass cased barometer and recording device, from Ronald Danielson; a #4 spade in great condition, from Barry Knowlton; a photo of an old time "keg party", which includes Gordon Grant, from Eleanor Grant.

We have also received financial donations from Ruth Albert, Priscilla Almquist-Olsen, Esq., Charlton & Eleanor Ames, David & Sally Ames, Ethel Anderson, Phyllis Anderson, Stella Anderson, Robert Babineau, Patricia Baker, Gerald Beals, Alfred & Barbara Beech, Richard & Judith Bissett, Evelyn Brown, Ronald Buba, Abel Camara, Ernest Camara, Evelyn Carlson, William & Beverly Carlson, Karen Carter, Brad & Nancy Cohenno, Michael & Patricia-Ann Conley, Mary Cowgill, Edgar A. Craig, Charles Crivellaro, Celeste Dahlborg, Ronald & Karen Danielson, David Devore, Scott & Melanie DeWare, Anne Durgin, Rose Friedeborn, Stephen & Joann Freitas, Wally & Kay Fulcher, Robert & Ramona Gallagher, Joyce Gipson, Dorothy Goveia, John & Marie Graca, Norma-Jean Hanscom, Joan Hayward, Jessica Heft, Miriam Jackson, Julius Tofias & Company, LLC., John & Carolyn Kenyon, Margo & Richard Lawless, Wayne & Marilyn Legge, Janet Linehan, Jack & Judy Luke, Elaine Lundin, Deborah MacPhee, Kathleen Marathas, Alice McCarthy, Leo & Janice McEvoy, Frank & Anne-Marie Meninno, John R. Moran, Joan Morrison, Mr. & Mrs. Howard Morse, Jr., James D. Mullen, Patricia Maguise Parrie, Ella Porter, Howard & Elizabeth Porter, Nicolina Previti, Chet & Maureen Raymo, Elizabeth Rose, Thomas & Judy Sabin, Steve & Debra Salisbury, Louis & Jeanne Silva, Dr. Joel & Susan Solomon, Arthur Stecker, Robert & Althea Thornton, David & Hazel Varella, Jean Visnauskas, Edwin & Lynn White, Avery & Elizabeth Williams, David Williams.

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

Save The Date!

Save September 24th at 3 P.M. for the re-enactment of "Our Town", a play written by Amory Parker and Mrs. Graham Smith. The play, which features several scenes set during different periods of Easton's history, was originally produced September 27th, 1951. An additional scene has been added focusing on 2009. Tentatively the performance weather-permitting will be on the stage at "Gueset Gardens." otherwise it will be in the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall through the generosity of Frederick L. Ames. Specifics will be in the next newsletter. This is a joint project with the Ames Free Library and Oakes Ames Memorial Hall.

Summertime Fun!

The Society will host Family Discovery Day at our July open house. We will be offering a variety of walking tours around the North Easton area. Children will be able to participate in several activities such as a scavenger hunt. There will be something for everyone! In August, we'll be displaying some photos with "altitude", from our collection of aerial photos. If you've never seen Easton by air, this is your opportunity! We can also accommodate groups. If you're looking for summer activities, come in!

Society Receives Grant for Archival Materials

The Society recently applied for, and received, a \$200 grant from the Easton Cultural Council. The grant was used to purchase archival sleeves and storage boxes to house some of our collection. This program is supported in part by a grant from the **Easton Cultural Council**, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. The Society expresses our sincere thanks for their support!

Reminiscences, Volume II

Dan Paré and Hazel Varella are working on the second volume of "Reminiscences" which should be available in early fall. In case you missed it, these are a collection of items from our archives that provide a look back at Easton through the eyes of various writers. Volume I has been very well received and is available for purchase at the Society.

Chowder and Chatter

This year's Chowder and Chatter at Southeastern Regional was a great success! This is the 12th year for this event, originally developed by Dr. Robert Misiewicz, and funded through the generosity of Lee and Kevin Williams. Many thanks to our panelists Alice McCarthy, Elizabeth Porter, Jean Alger and Lee Williams. Extra thanks to Ed Hands, our expert moderator. Thanks also to Anne-Marie Meninno for decorating the gift basket.

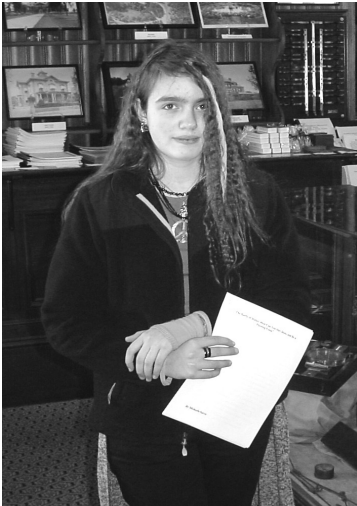
World War II Veterans Taped

The Society recently completed taping interviews with four World War II veterans. The two parts have been broadcast on the local cable TV station. The stars of the show are John Hurley, John Kent, Arnold Marcus, and Joseph Wilbur. Ed Hands and Frank Meninno hosted the event, which was filmed at the Easton Community Access Television studio at 50 Oliver Street.

2011 National History Day

Eighth graders from the Easton Middle School display their winning National History Day projects during the Society's January open house. The Society congratulates all of these fine students on a job well done! The photos on the next page are only a small representation of the many projects done by these students.

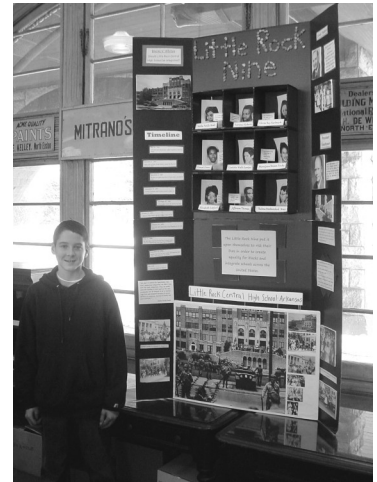
Two projects will compete at the National competition in June at Washington, D.C. The Little Rock Nine, by Amy Solov, Molly Donovan and Shannon Holleran and a documentary entitled The Ruby Bridges Story by Abi Baxter and Alycia Carroll will represent the Easton Middle School. We wish these students the best of luck in Washington!



Michaela Sarro presented a paper on the Battle of Hualao.



Rob Hawes project on the Treaty of Versailles—The Real Cause of World War II.



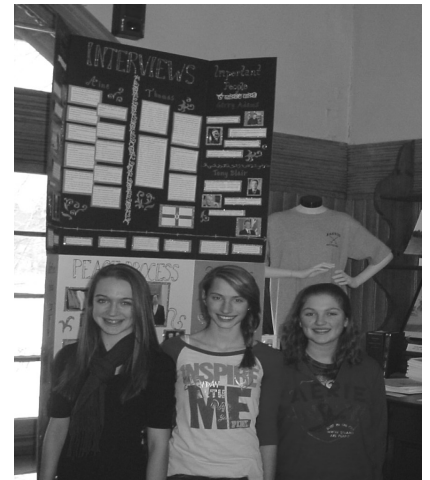
Chris Kine and his project on the Little Rock Nine.



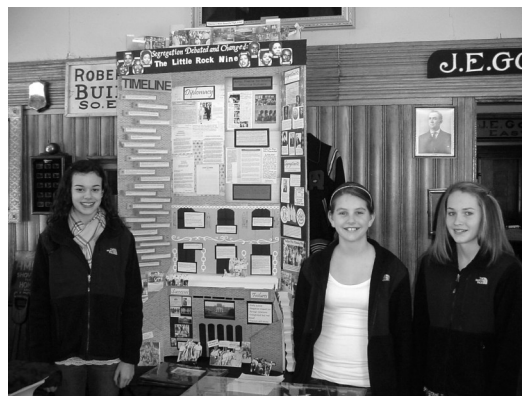
Catherine the Great was done by Hannah McKeen.



Elizabeth Hurley and Molly Cunha did their project on Galileo's Theory - Science Vs. Religion.



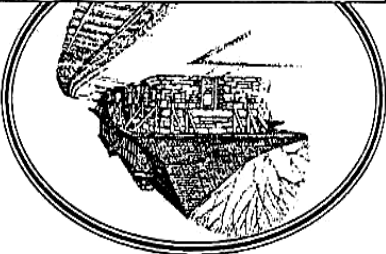
Darragh McLaughlin, Olivia Mileika and Mattea Sarnecki with their project on the Conflict between Northern Ireland and England.



Amy Solov, Molly Donovan and Shannon Holleran with their display on the Little Rock Nine. They will compete in Washington, D.C. in June!

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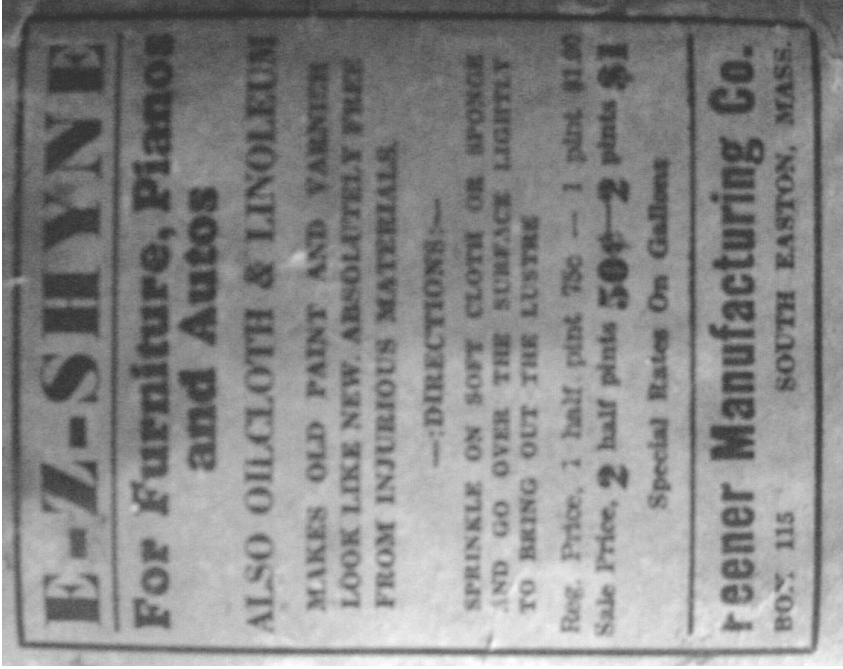
Old Colony Railroad Station

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Can You Help?

This E-Z-Shyne furniture polish bottle has been in our collection for some time. The contents of the bottle could be rubbed onto wood furniture, pianos and even autos (which had wood interiors), and could even be used on oil-cloth and linoleum. A little solution and some elbow grease would make old paint and varnish look like new. This “green” product claimed to be “absolutely free of injurious materials.” One half pint sold for \$.75 cents, a whole pint sold for \$1.00. According to the label, sale pricing could be gotten at \$.50 for two half pints, or two pints for \$1.00.

The mystery is where this was manufactured. The label, which is partially scratched, indicates a Feener (possibly Peener?) Manufacturing Company at Box 115, South Easton. The bottle has a screw top cap which dates it to about 1910—1920. If you can solve the mystery, or know anything about the family or business, please let us know!