

EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TRAIN TRACKS



Volume 12, Issue 4

Summer 2012

CALENDAR

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

Sunday, June 10th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 p.m. celebrating the Ames Shovel Shops

Thursday, June 14th, Flag Day

Wednesday, July 4th, Happy 236th Birthday America!

Sunday, July 8th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 p.m. with a Patriotic flair

Sunday, August 12th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 p.m. Program to be determined

Looking ahead...

Yard Sale, September 22nd

Annual NRT Harvest Fair, September 30th

Fall Bottle Drive, October 6th

Stonehill Mystery Walk with Chet Raymo, October 27th

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

Be sure to read the article on page 4 about a special donation of period clothing, from one of Easton's well known families!

On page 5, see what our 8th grade students did at our National History Day event!

Read an 1837 letter from a well known local man who endured some tough times on page 7.

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.

Easton Updates

It pleases us to be able to offer news on some exciting happenings around Easton! First, after months of anticipation, Beacon Communities has taken ownership of and broken ground on the Ames Shovel Shop project. The project, scheduled to be finished in November 2013, will provide 118 units of housing. There has been a lot of activity on the site. The former Long Shop is being gutted, part of the sheet metal covered plate shop has been razed, and overgrown trees and bushes have been removed. The Society and others are documenting the work being done with video and still images. A formal groundbreaking is scheduled for June 8th, but right now, it is full steam ahead for all involved! Stay tuned for updates as this project continues to move along.

The other project that is equally exciting is the possible purchase of the former Governor Oliver Ames estate by the Trustees of Reservations. This has been in the works for some time now. The Trustees, a non-profit group that owns and manages about 100 properties in Massachusetts, is planning on making the space public in 2013. They value conservation, history, sustainability and education, and this property would complement their other outstanding acquisitions. The Governor Ames estate features wonderful garden areas as well as many specimen trees. Also on the property is the well-preserved original stone carriage house with stables. What great news this would be if this land were to be preserved as open space. We'll keep you updated. For more information on the Trustees, visit their web site at www.thetrustees.org.

*The Easton Historical Society Newsletter "Train Tracks" is published quarterly by the Easton Historical Society.
Officers: President—Kenneth J. Michel, 1st Vice President—David Ames, Jr., 2nd Vice President—Edmund C. Hands
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

I always enjoyed taking photographs. I can remember begging my mother to use her old 126 film camera to take black and white photos around our yard. Later, my father took an interest in 35mm slides. I also found that to be a lot of fun. Eventually I purchased a cheap plastic camera from the old Village Store with my hard earned allowance. Of course, I still had to save to buy film and then to get it developed. There were no drugstore developing machines in those days! Later on, I purchased a Canon 35mm camera for my wedding. I have used that to record our family history through the years. I even took wedding photos of other family members with it!

All that practice is paying off now. Work has begun in earnest on the Shovel Shops, and I will be one of several people on site to document the transformation into housing. From the very beginning, I will be working to capture key phases of construction (and de-construction). Photographing finds on the property, landscape changes, interiors of the buildings and recording video of some of the work being done will create the raw material for a documentary that will eventually incorporate interviews with people who worked hard to save the site from demolition. When all is said and done, the finished product will document the complete story of how a town came together to save one of our nation's important, and most endangered treasures. And to think it all began with an old plastic camera!

Society Honors Former Treasurer

Veronica E. (Honohan) Carter turned 104 January 21st and was honored by the Society April 29th for not only being the oldest member of the Society but also having been chair of the Business Department of the Easton School System for 34 years. She retired in 1970 and served as treasurer of the Society from December 1975 to June 1981. She was presented with a plant and a specially framed certificate prepared by Nancy DeLuca and signed by Society President Kenneth Michel. Attending the ceremony were Board members Patricia A. Baker, Debra Salisbury, Hazel L. Varella and curator Frank T. Meninno. Also present were her brother James, nephew James Williams, Jeanette Peterson, and David Varella.



Mrs. Veronica Carter with her certificate.
Standing left to right: Hazel L. Varella,
Patricia A. Baker, Debra Salisbury.
Standing in back is Frank T. Meninno.



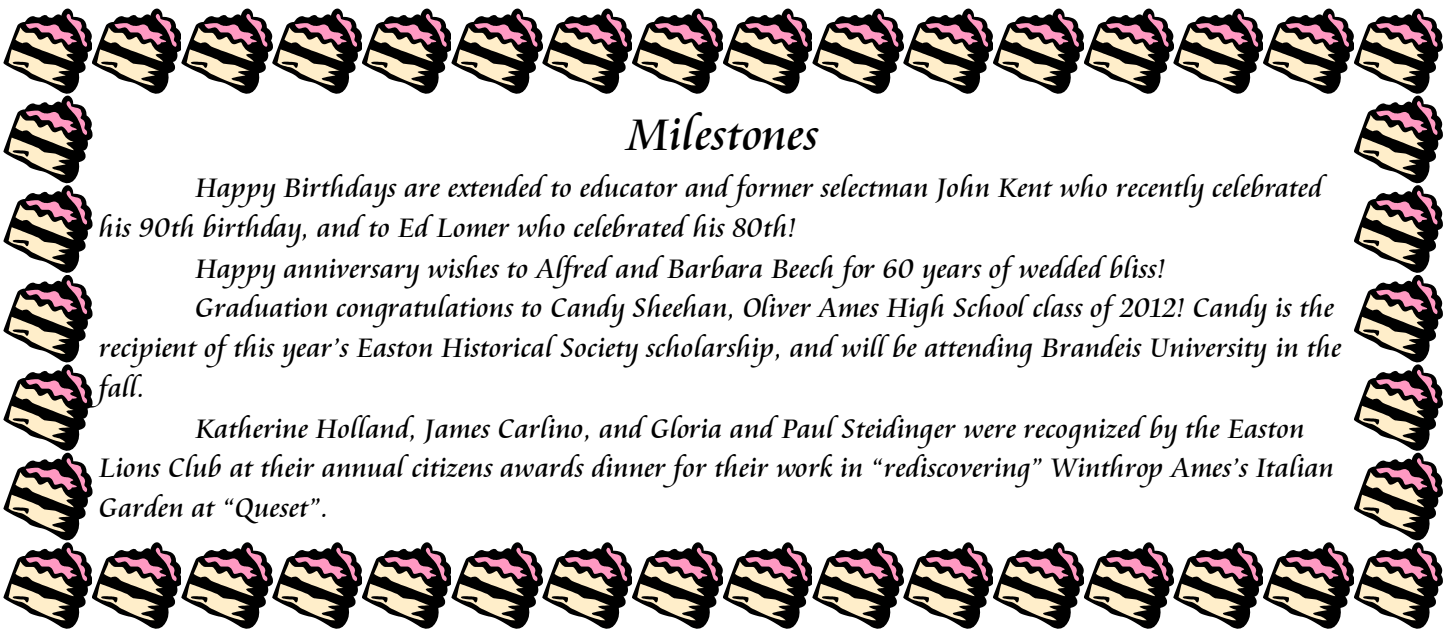
Hazel L. Varella, left, retired chair of the O. A. H. S.
Social Studies department, shares a few words with
longtime friend and fellow educator Veronica Carter.

In Memorium

Richard P. "Dick" Bissett passed away on March 8th. Dick was the president of the OAHs Class of 1953, and was one of four people from that class who arranged for the donation of the OAHs model given to the Society by that class. The former vice-president of the Community Bank was a 72 year resident of Easton and a long time Society member. He very much enjoyed the annual "Chowder and Chatter" dinners. Our sympathy is extended to his wife Judith, daughter Nancy Hamilton of Easton, son Stephen of San Mateo, CA., sister Rachel Nelson of NJ, and grandchildren James Nicholas and Tyler.

James Fanning passed away on March 30th. He had an extensive career as a registered professional engineer working at the Foxboro Company, Foster Grant, and Hoescht AG. He was awarded several patents for his work on early transistor technology, and received an honorary Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Engineering from Wentworth Institute of Technology in 2004. Jim taught seniors the art of digital photography and computer skills at the Council of Aging in Easton as well as at Massasoit Community College and the senior learning center in Abington. The Society extends its sympathy to his fiancé Suzanne Zaff (also a Society member), children James J. Fanning and wife Linda of Dennisport, Julianna M. Curry and husband John of Brockton, grandchildren Erik, Dustin, Samuel and Nathaniel, and great-grand children Austin, Aydin, Alyssa and Christopher.

Sympathy is also extended to member Norma-Jean Hanscom on the sudden loss of her son Scott. The Hanscom family was well known around Easton and Norma-Jean was the postmaster at the Easton Post Office for many years, and an active member of the Eastern Star.



Milestones

Happy Birthdays are extended to educator and former selectman John Kent who recently celebrated his 90th birthday, and to Ed Lomer who celebrated his 80th!

Happy anniversary wishes to Alfred and Barbara Beech for 60 years of wedded bliss!

Graduation congratulations to Candy Sheehan, Oliver Ames High School class of 2012! Candy is the recipient of this year's Easton Historical Society scholarship, and will be attending Brandeis University in the fall.

Katherine Holland, James Carlino, and Gloria and Paul Steidinger were recognized by the Easton Lions Club at their annual citizens awards dinner for their work in "rediscovering" Winthrop Ames's Italian Garden at "Queset".

Our Appreciation is extended to...

- ◆ Lee and Kevin Williams for funding a very successful twelfth annual "Chowder and Chatter" evening.
- ◆ This year's "Chowder and Chatter" panel, David Ames, Jr. who spoke about the Trustees of Reservations, Nancy Cohenno who spoke on the Garden Club's Festival of Trees, Lee Williams who spoke on the Easton Grange and the Lions Club, and Chair of the Board of Selectmen Colleen Corona who spoke about the changes in Easton. Special thanks to moderator Edmund Hands for doing an excellent job with the panel.
- ◆ The students at Southeastern Regional who prepared, served and cleaned up under the direction of Chef Paula Kfoury and Bakery Specialist Michelle Berry.
- ◆ To all who made donations during the Ken Martin Memorial Bottle and Can Drive on May 5th, as well as helpers Tom Bono, Ed Hands, Roger "Pete" McNamara, Hazel Varella and Frank Meninno.
- ◆ To the members of the 2011-2012 Research Committee: Barbara Beech, Joanne England, Ed Hands, Frances Holland, Professor James Kenneally, Judge Leon Lombardi, Frank Meninno, Dan Pare, Maureen Raymo, Judy Sabin, Jean Visnauskis and Hazel Varella.

“This is my wedding outfit...”

the handwritten note said in elegantly flowing Victorian script. “Made by me and embroidered by my dear friend Lillian Turner Robertson.” The words of Elizabeth (Hebard) DeWitt carry us back to an era of handmade clothing with delicate needlework, and to her wedding to Harris A. DeWitt on October 30, 1907. This wedding outfit, as well as other items, are recent acquisitions of the Easton Historical Society thanks to Elizabeth and Harry’s grandchildren.



The handwritten note



The dress shoes

Layout design for this article was done by Randall DeWitt, great-grandson of Elizabeth and Harris DeWitt, with text by their granddaughter Charlotte DeWitt.

A Step Back in Time

Elizabeth and Harry DeWitt’s first child was a daughter they named Edith, born in October 1908, and followed in 1910 by twins Robert (Bob) and George (known as “Dick” to differentiate him from his grandfather George H. DeWitt, or “Red” because of his hair). They lived at 64 Center Street in North Easton, diagonally across the street from “the stone house,” where their (great-) Gram Potter lived, next to the former George H. DeWitt & Son lumberyard at the corner of Park and Center Streets.

“The little dress I made for my dear little daughter,” the note continues, and it is hard not to feel the love in that statement.

Back to the Future

Fast-forward to the next century: Edith’s own daughters Elizabeth Lee (Worrell) Hamilton and Anne Randall (Worrell) O’Neil, along with their elder brother Richard DeWitt Worrell, all of Rhode Island, discovered their mother’s collection of *her* mother’s handmade clothing, including the beautiful wedding dress and cream colored kid shoes; the tiny, hand-stitched baby clothes; an elegant black, floor-length cocktail dress complete with feather-trimmed hat and fur stole; and many other items... and they decided to return these items “home,” to North Easton and the Easton Historical Society.

“Although our mother (Edith) moved to Providence after her own marriage,” says Anne O’Neil, “she was very good about keeping the family history alive for us. As you see by our names, each one of us carries a small piece of it with us at all times. We are very privileged to be able to contribute in some small way to keeping that history alive for future generations.

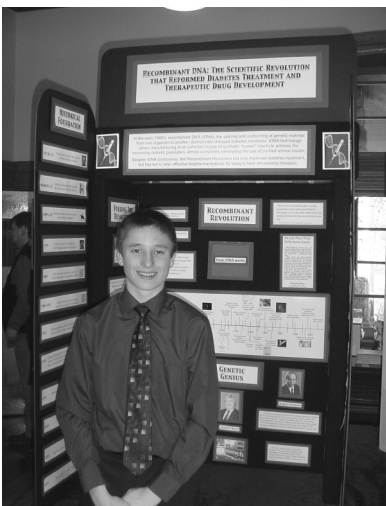
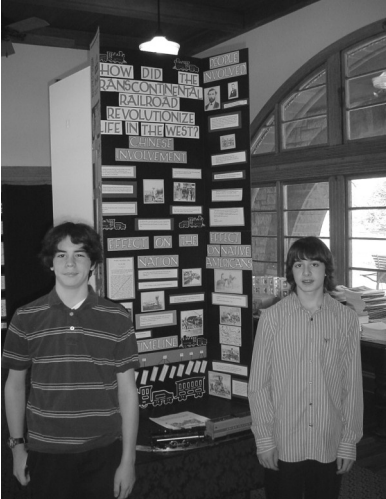


Left to right:

<i>George H. DeWitt</i>	<i>(born 1910)</i>
<i>Elizabeth Hebard DeWitt</i>	<i>(born 1880)</i>
<i>Robert Otis DeWitt</i>	<i>(born 1910)</i>
<i>Harris Ansel DeWitt</i>	<i>(born 1877)</i>
<i>Edith Read DeWitt</i>	<i>(born 1908)</i>

“Once again, thank you to the Historical Society for all that you have done and continue to do for the community. You have established a wonderful facility and a place to showcase the history of the area.” Curator Frank Meninno and Recording/Corresponding Secretary Hazel L. Varella are both extremely pleased to receive the donation. “The DeWitt family has a long and extraordinary link to Easton’s history,” says Meninno. “The visual impact from this family of outstanding builders in Easton is obvious when one passes the Unionville School or the former North Easton Fire Station, now the Easton Children’s Museum. The Society is honored to be the recipients of this outstanding collection of early 20th century clothing from one of the town’s leading families. These items will teach us about a time many have already forgotten, and offer a rare and personal connection that will allow us to share this history with so many others. “

The DeWitt collection will be on display at a future date. Stay tuned for details, or contact Curator Frank Meninno at 508-238-7774 or email at curator@eastonhistoricalsociety.org.

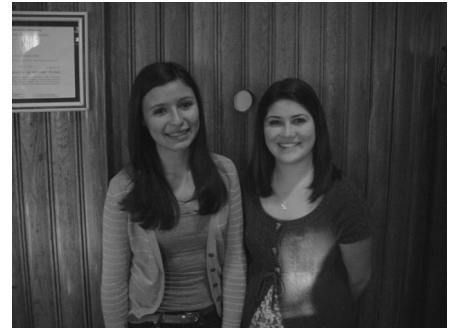


2012 National History Day

Eighth graders from the Easton Middle School displayed 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!

Three projects will compete at the National competition in June. Connor Naughton will compete with his project Recombinant DNA, Dan Hershlag and Corey Springhetti take their project The Transcontinental Railroad on the road, and Olivia Phelps will compete with her project Revolution of the Heart.

We wish these students the best of luck in Washington! And now for the photos—left column, top to bottom: Sarah Bean and Hannah Tetrault; Dan Hershlag and Corey Springhetti; Hannah Friend and Cassandra Gavin; Connor Naughton. Right column, from top to bottom Amber Foote and Julia Corona; Karinna Meckler and Julia Benson; 8th grade history teacher and National History Day coordinator Bryan McSheffrey and Benjamin Mailloux; Olivia Phelps. Other students not pictured who took part are Eleni Constantinou, Sam Bruha, Kasey Hayes, Delaney Benton, Sam Lang, Chi Chi Akanegbu, Natalie Toomey, Gianna Ferrini, Siobhan Finnerty, Erin Fitzgerald.



RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Oliver Ames High School class photos 1919-1928 with members of the Harvey family identified, C.J. Harvey Market sales slips, 400 Club menu, scrapbook pages and news clippings, shaving mug, from Mary Rose Garfagna and Catherine Harvey; 1809 muter roll, from Jared Lothyan; 1855 map of Easton, from the Ames family; Simpson Spring bottles and a cardboard bottle case, from Tom Bono; 1916 Barnum and Bailey circus poster, 3 photos of "Langwater" and the barn just before it burned, from Ronald Danielson; Simpson Spring wood bottle case and bottles, advertising folder for important papers, Reminisce magazine February/March 2012 mentioning Bill Sissell, a student pastor at Stonehill College, from Bernice Baker Skinner; Randall's Dairy pint glass bottle, from Gil Heino; 4 hand painted street signs, from Richard Beal; entrenchment tools, photo of a Dodge bus and Goss bus sign with Jennie Goss and Roger McNamara in the picture, from Roger "Pete" McNamara; numerous early 20th century household items including kitchen utensils used in Swedish pancake cooking, a lace making tool, and an auxiliary police helmet, from the estate of Enie Almquist through her daughter Priscilla Almquist-Olsen; news clippings about Oliver Ames football and a photo of cheerleaders, from Doug Mullen; Currier and Ives print "Through to the Pacific" from Sarah Ames; 1957 Oliver Ames class ring, from Robert Carpenter; Southeastern Regional jacket and foamboard, from Kristen Carpenter; album of family photos and tintypes, several photos of firemen and testimonials to former fire chief Bailey, family photos including house photos, photo of the Hancock Vets band, O.A. basketball team photos, photo of 1946 Old Timers Night (firemen), from Harold Bailey; Allied Transport model truck and Charles McCarthy's milk health school card, from Alice McCarthy; photos of the Frothingham Park 75th Anniversary ceremony in 2008, from Betty Kellogg; Oakes Ames memorial book, Easton Pharmacy truck photo taken on Jenny Lind Street, other photos from Easton, from Gary R. Sullivan; old school desk, from William and Linda Rose; 71 years of Outlook Club records from 1888-1959 and a roll call book, 1950's, 45th reunion photo of the OAHs Class of 1946, Outlook Club's 1964-65 booklet, 1964 By-Laws of the Outlook Club, 75th anniversary booklet of Harmony Grange #247 1905-1980, from Norma-Jean Hanscom; "To God be the Glory" poster from Easton's 250th anniversary, from Rick Martin; a collection of period clothing from the DeWitt family; old post-cards of Easton and other locations, from David and Toby Brooks; Easton Founders Gala shirt, October 22nd, 1994, from Dr. Robert Misiewicz; tee shirt from the Sue Rivard 2010 Holiday Classic, from Elaine Clement-Holbrook; documents about Easton including the Anna C. Ames band, Unity Church, and the Paul Dean Lodge, from Patricia A. Baker; large plan book for "Wayside", the estate of Mary Ames Frothingham prepared by Hayward and Hayward, flatboard of 14 photos of "Wayside" from 1910-1930, from the family of Jack and Judy Luke; papers from the Easton Historical Society flea markets of the 1970's, and related materials, from Deborah MacPhee; framed picture of an early Morse car and the exterior of the Crofoot Geat building, from Alfred Morse, with gratitude to Paul Steidinger for picking up these items; three 19th century letters from the Selee, Wheaton and Lothrop families, from Anne-Marie and Frank Meninno.

We have also received financial donations from Mary Rose Garfagna and Catherine Harvey, Betty Kellogg, Alice McCarthy in honor of John Kent's 90th birthday, Jonathan, Allison, Mary and William, grandchildren of Alfred and Barbara Beech in honor of their 60th wedding anniversary, Robert and Jean Alger, Priscilla Almquist-Olsen, Mr. and Mrs. Charlton Ames, Mr. and Mrs. John S. Ames, III, Phyllis Anderson, Virginia Anderson, Robert Babineau, Patricia A. Baker, Richard and Linda Beal, Gerald Beals, Alfred and Barbara Beech, Myrtle Blaisdell, James and Mary Boudreau, Robert Brooks, Evelyn Brown, Ronald Buba, William and Beverly Carlson, the Cohenno family, Mary Cowgill, Edgar Craig, Dr. Ellen Dehm and Catherine Adler, Stephen and Joann Freitas, Rose Friedeborn, "Give with Liberty" thanks to James MacPhee, Dorothy Goveia, Norma-Jean Hanscom; Joan Hayward, Jessica A. Heft, Stanley Kavka, Professor James and Louise Kenneally, Carolyn Kenyon, Robert D. and Sally G. King Trust, Barry Knowlton, Richard and Margo Lawless, Bernard E. Lawson, Helena Luxton, Kathleen Marathas in memory of Jack and Judy Luke, Alice McCarthy, Leo and Janice McEvoy, John Moran, G. H. Morse, Jr., John and Ginny Murray, Earl A. Nichols, Sharon O'Leary, David and Cindy Olson, the Pare family, Patricia A. Parrie, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Porter, Dr. Chet and Maureen Raymo, Thomas and Judy Sabin, Dr. and Mrs. Joel Solomon, Ronald Somerville, Gail P. Starkey, Gloria Freitas-Steidinger, Gary Sullivan, Robert and Althea Thornton, United Technologies with thanks to Henry Ames, David and Hazel Varella in memory of Richard Bissett, John and Amanda Varella, Jean H. Visnauskis, Avery and Betty Williams, David Williams, Kevin and Hala Williams.

The Easton Historical Society is grateful for the continued generosity of our donors.

The Society has received the following note from Dr. Robert Misiewicz who has been dealing with long-term issues related to past surgery: "Carol and I would like to thank you all for the cards. The wishes and encouraging words are very helpful in my recovery." Those wishing may send Dr. Bob and his wife Carol, who has been his excellent caretaker, cards at their home address: Dr. & Mrs. Robert Misiewicz, 6 Williams Road #6, Norton, Ma. 02766.

Coming Attractions

Professor Chet Raymo will lead a mystery walk around the grounds of Stonehill College on the morning of Saturday, October 27th. Details will be announced in the next newsletter.

Reminiscences Volume Three is being prepared by Dan Pare and Hazel L. Varella for a fall publication. This next volume in the very popular series of stories from our archives features a variety of articles about the Anna C. Ames Band, the first O.A.H.S. football team, an early Easton library, Rev. William Chaffin's aunt, the Morse car and many other informative articles.

The Society will be hosting a special open house about old postcards. On display will be collections held by the Society as well as private collections. If you have old postcards that you would like to lend for this exhibit, please call or email the Society. We may also hold a postcard swap as a part of this event.

We are hoping to have an open house featuring Simpson Spring, either later this summer or in the fall. Stay tuned for more information!

The annual yard sale is being planned for September 22nd. We will gratefully accept your donations of good used items in September. Unfortunately we do not have the room to store too many donations over the summer months. Table space will also be available, and will be detailed in the next newsletter.

The fall Ken Martin Memorial Bottle and Can Drive will take place on October 6th.

And you think things are tough today!

Things are tough all over, and the economy hasn't done anything of note in some time now. Of course this isn't new. We have had our ups and downs many times in our country's history. The letter below, donated by Frank and Anne-Marie Meninno, gives us a personal glimpse into one such time, written by one of Easton's noted citizens. The letter is transcribed just as it is written.

Easton, Jan'y 5th 1837

Mr. Friend Drake

Sir,

I am pushed very hard indeed for money and am by necessity compelled to call on many of those who owe me that I should be very glad to excuse. I have written more than two hundred letters and have not been able to raise sufficient to meet my engagements. I have often passed over your note when looking over my papers and did not intend to have called on you but my poverty compels me.

Yours

Respectfully

Cyrus Lothrop



Service trucks, bobcats and dumpsters signal the beginning of the long-awaited Ames Shovel Shop project. Between now and November 2013 workers will transform the buildings and landscape into a preservation friendly housing community.

Address changing? Please tell us!

Address Service Requested

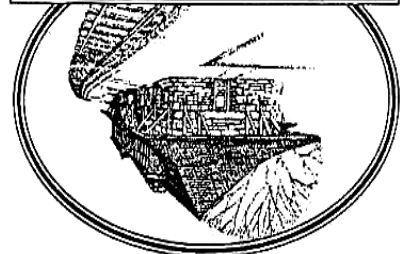
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Old Colony Railroad Station



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