

# EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## TRAIN TRACKS



Volume 10, Issue 1

SEPTEMBER 2009

### CALENDAR

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

**Monday, September 7th, Labor Day.**

**September 13th, 2 P.M. Society Meeting at "Queset", Guest speaker Dr. William Hanna will speak on "The Plot to Steal Lincoln's Body."**

**Saturday, September 19th, Yard Sale, 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. Reserve your spot with form inside!**

**Sunday, October 4th, annual NRT Harvest Fair at "Sheep Pasture", former estate of Oliver Ames.**

**Saturday, October 10th, Bottle Drive, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M.**

**Sunday, October 11th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M. Train Day!**

**Saturday, October 24th, Spooky Ride. Reservation form inside.**

**Tuesday, October 27th, North Easton Savings Bank Tour. Reservation form inside.**

**Saturday, November 7th, 40th Anniversary Celebration!**

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

*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.*

### Society Receives Special Gift

The Easton Historical Society has received a gift of \$11,000 from the Friends of the Ames Shovel Works at North Easton. The gift is the result of an Easton Heritage Evening held recently at Langwater, the home of Mrs. Oliver F. Ames. This very generous gift will be used to promote the preservation of Easton's unique history.

The Friends group was formed in response to a proposed Chapter 40B housing development proposed for the site of the former Oliver Ames and Son shovel factory complex. The present owners, Easton Shovel Shop LLC., have developed a comprehensive plan that includes housing and some commercial space. Demolition of some buildings was proposed as part of the redevelopment, and some new construction was also a key feature in the plan. Recently, the Easton Zoning Board of Appeals granted a permit to allow the project to move ahead, but with conditions limiting the impact to some of the historic structures on site. The owners have appealed this decision to the state, and a ruling is expected this fall. Several abutters have filed a suit claiming that the board's decision did not go far enough in preserving the site. Further complicating the issue is the filing of demolition permits by the owners for the entire site. Under the town's Demolition Delay by-law, the Easton Historical Commission determined that the buildings are "preferably saved". The town and developer now have one year to work out an agreement on this, which the developers say they are willing to do.

The site was named to the National Trust's 11 Most Endangered List for 2009, and is an integral part of the North Easton Village historic and landmark districts. It anchors one of the very few intact industrial villages in the state. Industrial activity at the site can be traced to the early 1700's. The village has changed little since the late 1890's.

One of the key words in our mission statement is "preserve". As such, we stand ready to serve as a helpful resource in protecting Easton's historic character. Your Society is concerned about *any project* that could have an impact on historic sites in Easton. The outcome of this proposal is still up in the air, but we remain hopeful that this site will be developed in a way that compliments the great history we all share.

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

# The Station Master

President Deborah MacPhee



Left to right: Mrs. Oliver F. Ames; David Ames, Jr., President of the Friends; Deborah MacPhee, President of the Society; Lee Williams and Priscilla Almquist-Olsen, Friends. Also present were Mrs. David Ames, Sr.; William Ames; Frederick Ames.

This past June, I had the pleasure of attending the Easton Heritage Evening event held at “Langwater,” home of Mrs. Oliver F. Ames. The evening was held by The Friends of the Ames Shovel Works, and featured a tour of the historic H. H. Richardson designed Frederick Lothrop Ames Gatelodge and the “Langwater” mansion. It was truly a remarkable event!

As the evening was coming to a close Mr. David Ames, Jr. asked me to join him on the porch and announced that the proceeds from the evening were to be donated to the Easton Historical Society. A few weeks later, at our annual meeting held at Queset, Mr. Ames presented the Society with a check for \$11,000.

The Society is fortunate to have so many supporters. The entire Board of Directors is deeply appreciative of this generous donation from The Friends of the Ames Shovel

Works. A key focus of The Society’s mission is to preserve the unique industrial, social, cultural, architectural, and environmental history of Easton. These funds will help us to advance this goal.

## Curator’s Corner

Curator / Caretaker Frank T. Meninno



Frederick Lothrop  
Ames  
1835—1893

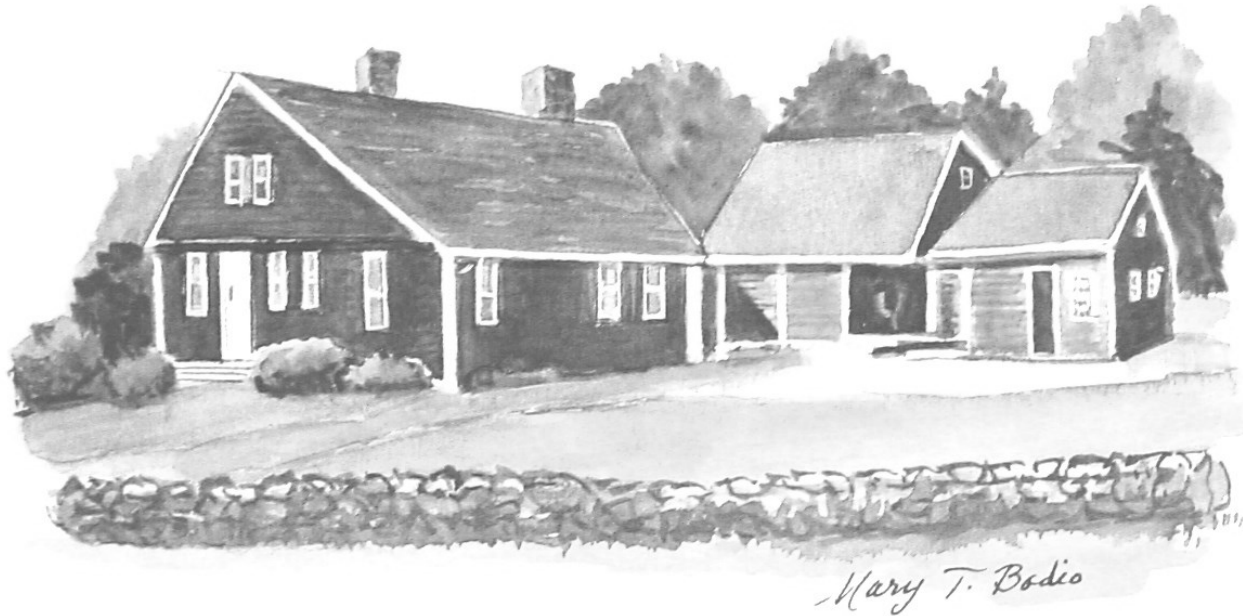
We are soon approaching the 40th anniversary celebrating the gift of the former Old Colony Railroad Station from the Ames family to the Society. I have written about the Richardson building and Olmsted landscaping. Now it is time to take a quick look at the man who made all this and more possible: Frederick Lothrop (F. L.) Ames, the man who made North Easton the treasure it is today.

F. L. Ames was one of two children, and the only son, of Oliver Ames, Jr. and his wife Sarah (Lothrop). He attended Concord and Phillips (Exeter) Academies and graduated Harvard at the age of 19, preparing for a career in law. However, the family business demanded his time and talent. Beginning in the company office as a clerk, F. L. eventually became treasurer. When Oliver Jr. died in 1877, F. L. became president of the Union Pacific, beginning his great love of railroads. He was involved in as many as 75 railroads. Other interests took him into real estate, and his extensive Boston holdings had him being compared with the Astor’s of New York. At the time of his death he was well

known as the wealthiest man in New England.

F. L. Ames was a man of many passions, including the breeding of cattle for milk production, developing the famous Langwater Guernsey breed, and he was a renowned horticulturist. His orchid collection was the most important on the east coast. He was also a lover of art and architecture. Through his Harvard connection he became familiar with the work of Richardson. F. L. Ames was directly responsible for three of the five Richardson buildings in North Easton ( the Frederick Lothrop Ames Gate Lodge, the Gardner’s Cottage and the Old Colony Railroad Station), and heavily influenced Richardson’s involvement in the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall and the Oliver Ames Free Library. Look for more details about this fascinating man in upcoming newsletters.

## New! 2009 Holiday Ornament 1717 Josiah Keith House



The Society is happy to announce the seventh and latest addition to our popular series of holiday glass ornaments: the 1717 Josiah Keith House. Captured in vibrant red by well-known watercolorist Mary T. Bodio, the house on Bay Road is the oldest standing house in Easton. Originally a tavern, the house was lived in by members of the Keith family until the 1960's.

As in the past, the price of the ornament is still only \$10 each, or 4 for \$36. To reserve your advance order, send a note with your name, address, phone number, quantity and payment made out to Easton Historical Society, to: Hazel Varella, 121 Center Street, North Easton, MA 02356. All orders received will be acknowledged.

Have you started your collection yet? There is still time to get the other six ornaments featuring the five H. H. Richardson buildings and the Rockery by F. L. Olmsted as painted by Mary T. Bodio. Special pricing is available for sets. In these tough times you can get a head start on your holiday shopping, and these ornaments make wonderful (and affordable) gifts. *The Society expresses its sincere thanks to Mary T. Bodio for graciously allowing us to use her artwork for this ornament.*

### **Easton's Newest Hall-of-Famer**

**Easton native Charlotte DeWitt, CFEE, has been inducted into the International Festival and Events Association (IFEA) Hall of Fame. Charlotte is the president of International Events, LTD. of Boston, MA. Known as the association's most prestigious honor, the IFEA Hall of Fame recognizes those outstanding individuals who, through their exceptional work and achievements, have made a significant contribution to the Festivals and Events industry and a profound difference in the communities they serve. Charlotte joins the prestigious ranks of 49 others elected by their peers during the past 18 years. Event production, speaking engagements, consulting and teaching activities have taken Charlotte to some 29 countries on five continents during her illustrious career.**

**Charlotte will be officially inducted at a luncheon during the IFEA's 54th Annual Convention & Expo, in Indianapolis, Indiana, on September 23, 2009. Congratulations Charlotte!**

## Past Memories of Bay Road and Life on the Farm in 1938 -1942

### By Althea Russell Thornton

#### Part Three

I can't forget the September 1938 hurricane. At 3:30 P.M., coming home from school, just before Johnson's Farm on Bay Road (now Gomes) open field, the wind whipped stinging stones onto our bare legs. We were picked up and brought home. The wind howled all night. The next morning was bright and sunny and showed trees down everywhere. Electricity was off and a huge elm tree fell across the Eldridge's roof. All of the trees in the middle of our pine grove went down leaving only the edges standing. Later, portable saw mills were set up by Mr. Rohdin and Mr. Caney and un-milled lumber was made and stored in our barn. There are pictures of this type of operation in the Historical Society's archives. Our house at 331 Bay Road was framed in from this lumber. We had the rest of the week off from school. The next morning it was bright, sunny and warm. Mr. Mann came down to see why we were not in school even though there was no electricity. My father worked on WPA projects at that time for the Town of Easton and helped clean up after the storm. They took salt pills at that time when it was very hot and were sweating profusely.

When World War II started in December of 1941 our uncle Walter Squibb was a captain in the Salvation Army and head of the USO at Camp Dix in New Jersey. We were right in the middle of dinner when the phone rang at 7 :00 P.M. at our home on Bay Road and he was asked to return immediately for duty. Emotions ran high.

Camp Myles Standish was built in Taunton and it changed Bay Road forever. Bay Road was upgraded in the 40's because of World War II and the Army Corp of Engineers did it. They had German and Italian prisoners of war working on it with armed guards. We talked to the prisoners as they took a break and they were very impressed with the beauty of our countryside and hoped to come back after the war. Ernestine and I were about 13 years of age.

We had blackouts. Our warden was Clinton Rohdin, who made sure no lights would show and car headlights were painted black on the tops. We had sugar and gas rationing. I remember worrying about U-boats off the shore. The old saying was "Loose Lips Sink Ships." We saw convoy's going over Bay Road for debarkation and were very careful not to talk about them. In our class room at the North Easton Grammar School our project was to pick the caterpillar egg cases from roadside trees because of no spraying and gas rationing of supplies. No nylons for women, they needed that material for parachutes.

We had victory gardens, made containers for seeds, grew plants, transplanted when frost was over, raised some for eating every day. We took the fresh vegetables into the Boston Market before 5:00 A.M. We picked apples for applesauce. We canned vegetables for the coming winter. We had a root cellar for potatoes, beets, carrots, turnips and winter squash. Mom used to make our bread when she had the ingredients. She put them on the buffet in the dining room near the hot air vent to make them rise. The odor was wonderful! Tasteful too! She made large trays of rice pudding with raisins. Of course, there were those large spoonfuls of cod liver oil too. Oh! How we gagged!

We recently received a nice collection of record albums dating back to the 1930's. We very shortly afterward realized the need for a phonograph that can play them! If anyone wishes to donate a player that can play 78 RPM and 33 1/3 RPM records, in working condition, please let us know!





### Spooky Rides are Coming!



Last years spooky hay ride was a great success. It was a perfect evening for some scary history and ghost stories. This year, we are offering 2 hayrides with historian and storyteller Ed Hands on October 24th. The first ride will begin at 5:00 p.m. and is kid friendly. The second ride beginning at approximately 6:30 p.m. will be aimed at a more mature audience. Parents with little ones are urged to use discretion when choosing which ride to go on. Children must accompany their parents. No child care is available during or between rides. Hot chocolate will be served following each ride.



RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THE SPOOKY RIDES! Due to the popularity of this event, we do not anticipate having room for walk-ins. The cost of the ride will be \$5.00 per person paid in advance. Please reserve your spots by sending your check made payable to the Easton Historical Society, along with this form, to: Easton Historical Society, P.O. Box 3, North Easton, MA 02356. You will be notified when we receive your reservation and you will be checked in before getting on the ride. Please call 508-238-7774 for more information.



Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_



Names of other attendees: \_\_\_\_\_



Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of reservations: \_\_\_\_\_



### Volunteer Opportunity

The Society is looking for a typist who would like to transcribe a small collection of documents. This work may be done in the comfort of your own home. Please call the Society, or drop us an email if you are interested in helping out.

### Easton Moves Up The Ladder!

Money Magazine has ranked Easton as the 37th best "Great American Town" for 2009! Last year we were ranked 48th in the same poll, which looks at a variety of factors including schools, house prices, and median income. Next stop: #1? Why not! We know how great Easton is!

### Wanted: Donations for Yard Sale

Do you have some "good stuff" that has been collecting dust? Your Society is looking for donations of saleable items for our own yard sale table. All kinds of things are welcomed, from furniture to bric-a-brac. Pickup of your donation may be arranged. All donations will be acknowledged, and your donation is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Just think, you can help your Society and get a tax write-off as well! Please call the Society at 508-238-7774 for more information.

## SPECIAL INVITATION TO HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS

Karen A. Carter, Senior Vice-President of the North Easton Savings Bank and a Society member, has invited other Society members to enjoy an evening at the Bank's new corporate office at the intersections of 106 and 123 in Easton. Following a tour of the new facility, guests will view Ed Hands' Power Point "The Passion of Stained Glass" focusing on the John LaFarge windows at Unity Church. The evening will conclude with refreshments.

In order to accommodate as many members as possible in the conference room, reservations must be made beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> using this form. Any questions should be addressed to Hazel L. Varella at 238-3614. THE SOCIETY EXTENDS OUR DEEP APPRECIATION TO KAREN FOR THIS INVITATION.

My guest \_\_\_\_\_ and I are interested in attending the special evening at the North Easton Savings Bank October 27. If there is additional room, I would also like to invite \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Please send to Hazel Varella, 121 Center Street, North Easton. She will notify you by mail which parking lot and door to use between 6:30 and 6:50.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

## YARD SALE RESERVATION FORM

Saturday, September 19th, 9 A.M. to 2 P.M., at the Station,  
80 Mechanic St., N. Easton

To reserve your space in our fall yard sale, please fill out this form and send it, with a check for \$15 payable to the Easton Historical Society, to: Easton Historical Society, P.O. Box 3, North Easton, MA 02356.

The yard sale will be held rain or shine. Proceeds from the sale of spaces benefit the Society. Your sales are yours to keep! Spaces are limited, and will be the equivalent of two adjoining parking spaces. They will be assigned on a first come, first served basis. You must bring your own tables, chairs or tents. There is no trash collection at the Station, so please plan on removing your trash from the site at the end of the day. Bathroom facilities are available. All items must be yard sale items. Unfortunately, crafters can not be permitted at this time. The Easton Historical Society assumes no liability for loss or damages to any person or property before, during or after this event. Thank you for supporting the Easton Historical Society.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



## WHO ARE WE?

Let's see if any of our members can identify these "boys of summer". The team was the Lions, and they were sponsored by the Easton Lions Club. We think the photo was taken during the late 1950's. It would be great to put some names with these faces. If you know the identity of anyone here, please drop us a line!

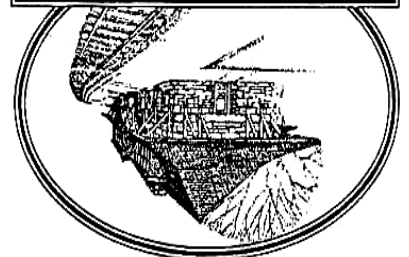
Address changing? Please tell us!

[www.eastonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.eastonhistoricalsociety.org)

508-238-7774

P.O. Box 3, 80 Mechanic Street  
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Old Colony Railroad Station



EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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