EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Summer 2026 **Volume 27, Issue 2**

Summer 2026

"Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it." Mary Oliver

All kinds of astonishing things are occurring at this time of year. Rhododendrons are blooming on Pond Street, bearded iris in the backyard. There are new chicken coops at Sheep Pasture, June sun glances off the tops of cars parked in the community gardens, their owners setting out tomato and squash plants and more. In the busy season of proms and weddings and graduations small beauties are easy to overlook. Wild phlox in the woods, water waking up at Old Pond and New Pond. In the yard the grass is too long and the bunnies creep out at dusk to eat expensive perennials but small brown birds have a nest in the fork of the hemlock tree and it looks like they have babies.

The Tricentennial garden next to the Railroad Station is a great place to sit and reflect. It feels quiet and separate as it surrounded by hedges. The creation of the garden was overseen by the EHSM and the Easton Garden Club with funds from private donations and a a 2024 Legacy Fund Grant. "The Easton Legacy Fund is an endowment built with gifts from friends of Easton committed to sustaining and enhancing our Town's rich quality of life." The school bell from the first Easton High School sits in the grass and the American flag flies overhead. Pillars (still unfinished) stand at each of two entrances. A birdbath waits for birds.

As Easton puts on its "summer face" enjoy all the small things, especially things of the natural world. For us older folks summer used to be hand-picked blackberries, lightning bugs, playing in the street, scary games after dark, wild rhubarb, and freedom to wander. Whatever this summer brings for you- "Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it."

"And does it not seem hard to you, When all the sky is clear and blue, And I should like so much to play, To have to go to bed by day?"

- from Bed in Summer by Robert Louis Stevenson

CALENDAR

Friday, June 5, Victorian Society Visit

Sunday, June 14, Open House, features the Declaration of Independence

Friday, June 19, Juneteenth

Sunday, June 21, Summer Solstice

Sunday, June 21, Father's Day

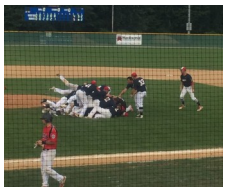
Saturday, July 4, Independence Day

Sunday, August 16, King Family Member Cookout. New members welcome!

Monday, September 7, Labor Day

Saturday, September 12, Rosh Hashana

Sunday, September 20th, Open House, "The Easton Huskies"



Monday, September 21, Yom Kippur

Tuesday, September 22, Fall Equinox

The mission of the Easton Historical Society and Museum is to preserve, promote and interpret the unique industrial, social, cultural, architectural and environmental history of the Town.

Museum News

"Our Flag Day Open House on Sunday, June 14th will be a very special celebration and is expected to be a *full house / standing-room-only* event. We will be welcoming Mrs. Maffeo's 5th grade class and their families for the premiere showing of the ECAT film: ***The Reading of the Declaration of Independence,*** *performed by the 5th Grade Students of the Richardson/Olmsted School*. This program is our Museum's tribute to the **250th anniversary of our nation's independence**. We will also proudly unveil our new 85" smart TV, which will allow us to present the film in a vivid, immersive way for our guests. ECAT will be filming the Open House itself and will produce a final edited version for release closer to the Fourth of July, to be shared on their website and YouTube channel. " President, Jon Coe

The Easton Historical Society & Museum recently received a grant from the Robert D. and Sally G. King Fund to provide general operating support for the organization. These annual grants have contributed nearly half of our recurring operating budget in recent years. This continued support has played an important role in preserving our historic building, sustaining museum operations, and advancing educational and community programs throughout the year. Since first receiving support from the King Fund in 2000, the Society has benefited from more than two decades of partnership and investment in preserving Easton's history for future generations. The King Fund is administered by The Boston Foundation.

OA students helped move items from the second floor to the basement on the Day of Kindness held annually in memory of OA student Devin Ness.

Check out our website!
www.eastonmahistoricalsociety.org
Much information is available to research. Memberships can also be renewed online. We have Student (free), Individual ($20), Family ($30), Senior ($10), and Corporate ($200), Sustainer ($250) and Lifetime memberships (one time payment $500).

At the Annual Meeting we reviewed the Easton 300 events that the Society proudly participated in: the Kick Off Event at Stonehill College, Arts & Cultural Festival at Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, Picnic, Concert and Flag Ceremony and the Anniversary Fireworks at OAHS, Parade and EHSM Trolley with 1952Lions Little League Members, Block Party at Governor Ames Estate with the Opening of the 250th Time Capsule, Town Bonfire at OAHS, and 300th Anniversary Gala at Stonehill College.

The Easton Historical Society Newsletter is published quarterly by the Easton Historical Society and Museum.

Officers

President Jonathan Coe
1st Vice President David Ames, Jr.
2nd Vice President & Secretary Steve Anderson
Treasurer Nancy DeLuca

Directors

Ken Michel, Past President
Joanne England
Virginia Murray
Robert Silva
Timothy Hurley
Anne Wooster Drury
Paul Berry
Robert Goodrich
Ed Hands

Research Advisor– Paul Berry
Staff Writer—Anne Wooster Drury

Annual Meeting Easton Historical Society

The annual meeting of the Easton Historical Society and museum was held on Thursday, May 21 at the Old Colony Railroad Station. Outgoing president Ken Michel introduced the meeting, oversaw acceptance of reports, and then moved on to the nomination and election of Officers and Directors. Interim President Jonathan Coe was officially voted in as our new President, and he took over the meeting. Former-Director Steve Anderson was confirmed as Second Vice President and Secretary. David Ames, Jr. remains as First Vice President and Nancy DeLuca as Treasurer. Returning Directors are Joanne England, Tim Hurley, and Ginny Murray, while outgoing president Ken Michel continues as a Director. New Directors voted in were Paul Berry, Robert Silva, Anne Drury, Robert Goodrich, and Ed Hands. We are sad to see Debbie Salisbury step down as Director although she assures us she will still be very much involved Society events. Congratulations to our new leadership– I'm sure 2026 will be an exciting and productive year. It's already off to a great start!
A new bylaw was voted on and accepted. The law increases the number of Directors to up to 13, confirmed officer titles, and the power of Directors is as defined by Mass law.

Along with Easton 300 Events other special events of the last year were noted: Bay Road Zoom Presentation, Chowder and Chatter Night, Ames Shovel Works Dedication, Hazel Varella Remembrance, Snow White Silent Film, OA Day of Kindness, Historic Josiah Keith House Tour, Presentation on new H.H. Richardson Drawings, Tricentennial Garden and Historic Site Tours.

Special recognition was given to Ken Michel. Throughout his tenure he generously contributed his time, energy and expertise in countless ways. Ken, thank you for a decade of dedicated leadership.

Notable Achievements of 2025 that were recognized: are the new Tricentennial Garden, the digitization of Town Reports, (1845-2022) with Boston Public Library, publication of the 16th Reminiscences, completion of the Station's basement which will be used for additional storage, a new online cataloging system for our collections, completion of our fire suppression system, and our ongoing organization and preservation efforts.

The following were recognized for their efforts: Volunteer Greeters: Anne Drury, Barbara Ready, Bonnie Porter, Dianne and Ken Sterling, Dottie Cummings, Jonathan Coe, Ken Michel, Nancy McGarry, Paul Berry, Ron Wood, Steve Anderson, June Bliss, and Tom and Kathy Hohl. Cecile Elie, our intern from Stonehill College was recognized for her productive internship and for bringing fresh energy to the team. Easton Historian Paul Berry was recognized as being invaluable in shaping our understanding of local history.

Hazel Varella (1932 to 2025), iconic First Lady of the Easton Historical Society, was remembered for working tirelessly to share her love of Easton and its history. Hazel was a motivating force behind many of our events, activities and publications. Hazel taught in the Easton Schools, pioneering a Local History class at Oliver Ames High School. She is greatly missed.

Lastly, On behalf of the Officers and Directors of the EHSM we offer our sincere thanks and appreciation to our members. Current membership is 405. Your support allows us to keep the past present for future generations.

Left is outgoing President Ken Michel, Right is new President Jonathan Coe.

Debbie Sailsbury we honor you for your years of service as a Director!

March Open House, Faces of Women

Faces of Women, a documentary highlighting contributions of women through Easton's history, was shown at March's Open House. March is Women's History Month. The film is a (very limited) portrayal of women or groups of women who were exceptional in some way. The following were discussed: Pioneer Women, Daughters of Liberty, Olive Reed (and family), Sylvia Drake, Fidelia Reed Heard, Mary Lavinia Lamphrey, Blanche Ames, Easton Nurses Association, Bettina and Natalie Hall, Mary Bodio, Anna Coffin Ames, Mary Shreve Ames Frothingham, Ruth Graves Wakefield, Lyn White, Virginia Reusch, Mrs. Elise Ames Parker, Easton's Female Athletes, Paula Peterson Hutcheson, Rose Scanlon DiBartolo, Catherine Kliger, and Susan Malkin-Kelly, and Hazel Varella. The film, by Anne Wooster Drury and Robert K. Holmes, is dedicated to Hazel Varella.
Many of these names will be familiar but some not. More women deserve to be included. If interested, the film can be viewed on Facebook at https://www.youtube.com/@annedrury1366

Here is a text excerpt from the documentary honoring Mary Bodio, artist, one of the women included,

"Mary Bodio (1925- 2018) Easton resident for over 60 years was a professional artist who concentrated on watercolor paintings, her works including many of the historic buildings in Easton as well as scenes of Cape Cod, Maine, and St. Croix. Popular prints included the Frothingham Park Print, Easton Schools Print, Stonehill College Print and Unity Close Print. She hosted numerous art shows and many of her watercolor portraits can be found around Easton and surrounding communities. Mary Bodio often used her talent to support organizations in town, including the Easton Historical Society. For 6 years, Mary annually designed a special Christmas ornament for the society. Each ornament depicted a historical Easton site, and she would sign copies during the annual Holiday Festival. Mary also designed a collection of note cards featuring watercolors of five Easton buildings designed by 19th-century architect Henry Hobson Richardson - the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, the Ames Free Library, the Old Colony Railroad Station, the Gardener's Cottage, and the Langwater Gate Lodge. She was a recipient of the Easton Historical Commission's Chaffin Award for historic preservation, Her work was shown in several galleries including Aires East Gallery, Brewster MA, Villa Della Chiesa Winery, Raynham MA, From the Heart Gallery, Oak Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard MA , Stonehill College Library, Easton, MA and Westin Carambola Beach Resort, St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Mary graduated from Massachusetts College of Art and was also the mother of 9 children. Easton was truly home to many talented women."

April Open House, Henry Knox's Noble Train of Artillery

Henry Knox, a Founding Father of the United States was born in Boston in 1750. He was a senior general in the Continental Army. Present at the Boston Massacre, he became an early supporter of the Patriot Cause. Knox was the organizer of the "Noble Train of Artillery". During the Siege of Boston Knox suggested to Washington that the artillery that had been recently captured at Ticonderoga and Crown Point be moved to defend Boston. Sixty tons of cannon and other armaments arrived in Boston after being hauled 300 miles by oxen and hoses. It was deep winter. The cannon were deployed to Dorchester Heights, fortifying the area,

leading to the evacuation of the British from Boston, after an 11 month siege. This was a turning point in the early days of the war. Recently Historical Society members and volunteers Ken and Dianne Sterling participated in the exercises and rededication of evacuation day at Dorchester Heights 2026 as members of the Sons of the American Revolution and Daughters of the American Revolution.

Although the British had evacuated Boston in March, troops were kept on duty in and about the place during the war. In June and July Matthew Randall, who had risen from the rank of ensign to that of captain, had a company encamped at Hull, and afterward at Castle Island. The Easton men in it were[2]—

Matthew Randall, *Captain*.	Elijah Pratt.
John Holmes, *Sergeant*.	Solomon Randall.
John Mears, *Drummer*.	John Simons.
John Allen.	Shion Turner.
Seth Burr.	David Taylor.
William Crossman.	Jacob Williams.
Daniel Dailey.	Fortune Conking.[3]
Josiah Jordan.	William Hayward.
Jacob Keith.	William Turner.
Isaac Lincoln.	Nathan Finney.
Abiah Manley.	Rufus Smith.
Daniel Macomber.	William Lawson.

Map of the Knox Trail in the winter of 1776 and a list of Easton men on duty at Hull and Castle Island after the evacuation in the months of June and July. (Chaffin). Evacuation Day is celebrated on March 17th in Massachusetts. And is an observed holiday in Suffolk County and Somerville.

MORE VOLUNTEERS

JUNE BLISS

June Bliss has always lived in Easton. June grew up on Pleasant Street and now lives around the corner on Linden Street. She is a recent volunteer and has brought much energy to the Society. June spent much of her life as a Visiting Nurse. She loves Easton's history and enjoys having a role in preserving it.

We have many great volunteers manning the Station. Please stop in if you see the OPEN flag outside,

PAUL BERRY

Paul is actually much more than a volunteer but that is how I first became acquainted with him a couple of years ago. Just recently at our annual meeting he was elected Director but his history with the Society is a long one. Paul was the Curator of the Easton Historical Society for 25 years, from 1980-2006. He has also served as Vice President more than once during that tenure. His return as a volunteer within the last couple of years has been fortuitous for us and we are lucky to have him. His knowledge of Easton and its past is incredible.

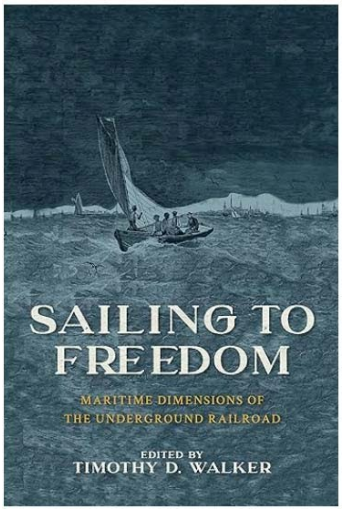
Paul's roots reach far back in Easton. He is a 10th generation member of the Keith family and for those of you who don't know, the Keith House on Bay Road is the oldest standing house in Easton.

His connection to the Railroad Station reaches back also. When he was young and the trains were still running he sold newspapers at the Station in the morning. The picture above is amazing as I caught Paul smiling!

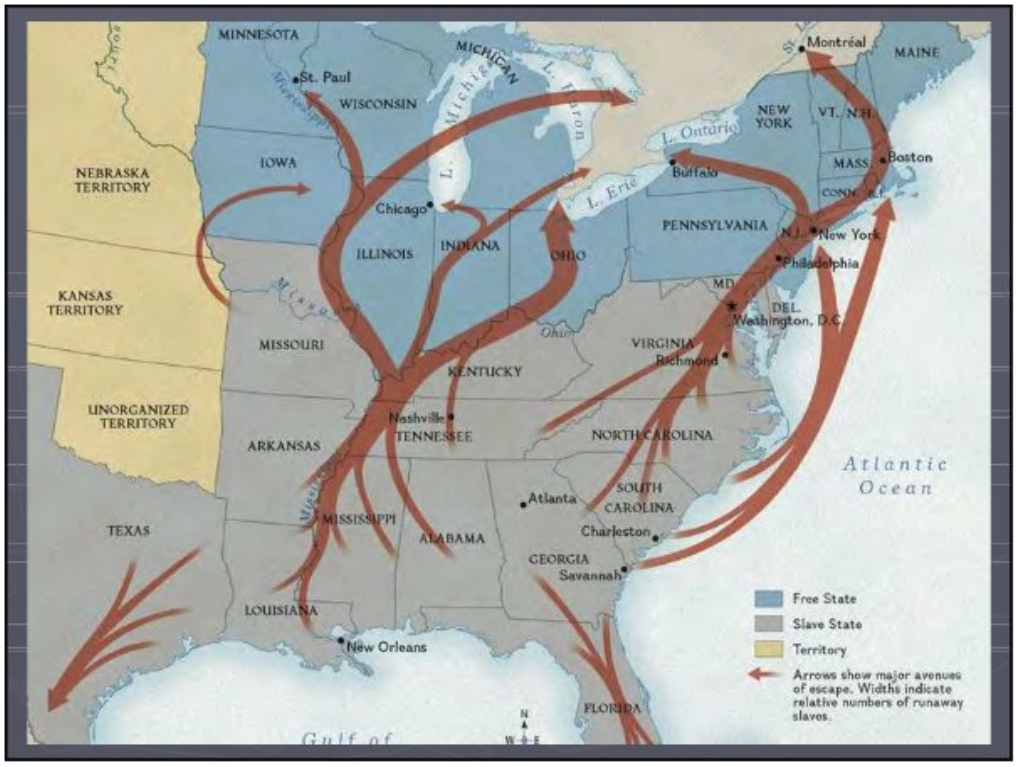
Annual Meeting, May 21, 2026

The annual meeting of the Easton Historical Society was held on Thursday, May 21 at 6 pm. New directors, and officers were voted in. Jonathan Coe- President, Steve Anderson– Second Vice President, Anne Wooster Drury– Director. There was a special presentation by Dr. Timothy Walker, *Sailing to Freedom-Maritime Dimensions of the Underground Railroad*. Walker is a Professor of History at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

Dr. Walker's talk highlighted little-known sea escapes on the Underground Railroad, emphasizing the maritime labor of enslaved African Americans in southern ports and tracing routes along the East Coast from the Carolinas, Virginia, and Maryland to northern cities including Philadelphia, New York, New Bedford, and Boston. While scholarship has focused mostly on overland routes, this research shows that many successful escapes from the Deep South were achieved by water.



Both enslaved African Americans and free African Americans either worked at the port cities or traveled to them and snuck onboard or paid to be brought on board and carried North. Ship's Captains were sometimes complicit in this activity although there were laws against helping Fugitive slaves escape. The evening was very informative.



Left: Map from the book *Sailing to Freedom* illustrating the routes taken by fleeing slaves. Compared to longer and more treacherous overland routes, water routes were quicker and less tedious. Cotton was king in the South and ships constantly travelled between coastal ports in the South and Northern markets. Many African Americans worked at sea, including those who signed onto whaling ships and were away for long periods of time. Taking their chances on dangerous voyages being preferable to enslavement. Punishments for ship's captains who transported enslaved people could be severe.

Second Grade Field Trip

In May all second grade classrooms visited the Railroad Station. There were three presentations prepared. President Jon Coe and Volunteer Barbara Ready gave a tour of the Station, Ken Michel took the children outside to tour and talk about the Shovel Shops and their history, while Directors Nancy DeLuca and Ginny Murray gathered the students in the new Tricentennial Garden to talk about it's connection to the architecture of the Station and how the design and plantings were chosen. A scavenger hunt was fun for the students and a learning experience. All of the questions were based on the talk given. Questions were:

GRADE 2 SCAVENGER HUNT
1.)
How many arches can you find on the Train Station building? Hint: Walk all around the building.
2.)
There is a pretty window made with Bullseye Glass. There are 2 words near it. What are the words?
3.)
Find some animals in the architecture. Where do you see them? What kind of animals do you think they are?
4.)
By looking at the train tracks, name a place the trains may have traveled to.
5.)
Find a large bell. What year is engraved on the bell?
6.)
A school in Easton was named after the person who designed the railroad station. What is his name?
7.)
What number goes with the word TRICENTENNIAL?

The second grade field trip is a great way to expose children to Easton's unique history.

**********DONATIONS**********

DONATIONS Year to Date 2026

Kristine H. Atkinson, Nancy Ames, Ruth Albert, William Ames, Anne-Marie Burke, Geraldine Brown, Harold Bailey, James Baker, Robert Babineau, Robert Brooks, Suzanne Bump, Nancy Cohenno, Ruth Carrigan, Thomas Coleman, Diane Dias, Jack DeLuca, Easton Garden Club, Harold Gershman, Richard Grant, Gregory Haddad, Robert Keller, Janet Linehan, Linda Lawler, Daniel Morse, Maura McCarthy, Ken Nykiel, North Easton Bank Charitable Foundation, Sharon O'Leary, Bruce and Claire Pratt, Edward Pare, Pauline Robello, Alan Swanson, Catherine M. Stone, Christine Salmon, John Strom, Robert A. Silva, Ron Somerville, Shaws - Give Back Program, Michael Torrey, Avery Lee Williams Family Foundation, Elizabeth Cuzner Wood, Francis Wood, Robert Wooster, and Maureen Yachimski.

This July 4th marks the 250th birthday of the United States, 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration was adopted unanimously by the Second Continental Congress, who were convened at the Pennsylvania State House. Our June Open House will focus on the Declaration of Independence, it will feature a filmed reading of the Declaration by a 5th grade class from Richardson Olmstead School. Much time and effort has gone into this. The Open House is Sunday, June 14th. Hope to see you there!

Easton Historical Society & Museum
Post Office Box 3
80 Mechanic Street
North Easton, MA 02356
508-238-7774
www.eastonmahistoricalsociety.org

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

Address Service Requested