EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

Summer 2025 **Volume 26 Issue 2**

IN MEMORIAM

HAZEL LUKE VARELLA

December 17, 1932-March 27, 2025

CALENDAR

Saturday, June 14, Easton300 Flag Day Celebration

Join us for a fun evening for the whole family as we salute our

Veterans & our flag!

OA HIGH SCHOOL COMPLEX

Flag Ceremony (4 – 5)
Town Picnic (5 – 8)
Band Concert (7 – 9)
Fireworks (9 pm) sponsored by Alex Pires
Sponsored by Bank of Easton

Sunday, June 15, Father's Day

Thursday, June 19, Juneteenth

Friday, June 20, first day of Summer

Fourth of July

Independence Day

Saturday, July 12, Easton300 parade, Saturday, July 12th. The parade route starts on Center Street & ends on Main Street.

Sunday, August 17, EHS&M Member Cookout

Monday, September 1, Labor Day

Saturday, September 6, Easton300 Block Party

Sunday, September 21, EHS&M Open House

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.

On April 3rd the Varella family held a remembrance event at the EHSM. It was a wonderful way to honor Hazel.

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Much has been happening at the Museum. Director Steve Anderson has been looking into better tools to manage our inventory. "We are currently exploring a web-based software called **Catalogit** as a potential tool for managing EHSM's inventory of significant objects, documents, photographs, and more. **Catalogit** offers a flexible, scalable solution for documenting our collection over the long term. This would be a gradual process, and part of that process involves deciding which items warrant inclusion. We can also control visibility—choosing which entries and supporting information are publicly accessible, and which remain private for internal use. A valuable feature of this tool is the ability to attach documents such as Deeds of Gift, Appraisals, etc. to individual items, ensuring our history of the objects is preserved. The software is accessible via smartphones, PCs, iPads, and other devices, making it convenient for Board members and volunteers to update records anytime, anywhere. Our long-term goal would be to integrate **Catalogit** with our website and eventually use it to replace most of the items currently displayed online." Thanks Steve for your spearheading this!

Basement renovations are moving ahead. Oliver Ames Seniors cleared debris from the basement on May 1, the 12th annual Day of KindNess in honor of Devin Ness.

Steve Anderson is working with Steve Salisbury to identify an audio visual package for the Board's consideration that would enhance the audio presentation quality at the station.

Volunteer Opportunities. We are still looking for volunteers at the Museum. Perhaps you'd like to be a greeter and welcome visitors to the Museum or perhaps you're more interested in organizing or archival work? Please reach out to the Museum if you are interested. We would love to have you. Thank you to Barbara Ready and Kristia McGill for recently joining our team.

Ron Wood & Paul Berry, two of our great volunteers. Give them a visit!

Remember to renew your membership if it is time! If you want to become a member or renew your membership go to our website and click on the MEMBERSHIP menu. It is easy to navigate and join/renew online, www.eastonmahistoricalsociety.org You can also pay by check. Mail to P,O. Box 3, 80 Mechanic Street, North Easton, MA 02356. If you are not sure of your membership status please contact us. Memberships can also be renewed this way. Our membership rates have changed slightly. We have Student (free), Individual ($20), Family ($0), Senior ($10), Corporate ($200), Sustainer ($250), and Lifetime ($500), memberships available. Check out the new website and update your membership if it's time! eastonmahsmuseum@gmail.com

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

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On March 19th the free virtual program "Places and Spaces in the Old Colony: Old Bay Road" was viewed by many. The program was jointly presented by the Old Colony History Museum, based in Taunton, the Norton Historical Society, and the Easton Historical Society and Museum.

Our May 23rd Open House was in remembrance of Easton music teacher Ruth Ashley. Ruth Ashley was a music educator in the Easton Public Schools for 17 years beginning in 1952. She was the first African-American teacher in Easton and much loved by her students. Initially she taught music in all Easton schools and later solely at Oliver Ames where she oversaw the Glee Club, the Concert Choir, and musicals. After leaving Easton in 1969 she taught at Lowell State College/ University of Lowell, eventually becoming the Chair of the Music Department. Ruth Ashley was also an excellent tennis player and talented athlete. The following comment is one of dozens shared by her students. "I loved her. As a teacher she was impeccable, as a person she was amazing." (Crystal O'Keefe)

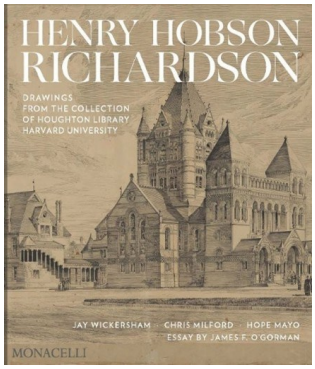
Mrs. Ruth Ashley

"Great teacher! Her passion for music inspired us all!" Kathy Greene

"My tennis game was greatly influenced by playing with and watching her and her husband during my youth. Very skilled player!!" Deborah Luke Coe

"Mrs. Ashley was such a caring and devoted teacher, wanting only the best for her students. She inspired me to try my best in all things musical and it shaped a lifetime of musical appreciation. It feeds my soul! Thank you Mrs. Ashley." Janie Hayes

April 6th, authors of Henry Hobson Richardson, a new book on Richardson's collection of drawings housed at the Houghton Library at Harvard University, spoke to a large audience at Oakes Ames Memorial Hall. The event was a joint effort of Oakes Ames Memorial Hall, the Easton Historical Society and Museum, and the Ames family. The authors, Jay Wickersham, Chris Milford and Hope Mayo, shared new information about Richardson's architectural drawings. The beautiful volume, pictured below right, is available for purchase at the RR Station. Thank you to Fred Ames and Joan Lundgren for collaborating. This was the largest gathering on the book tour including New York City.



The Chowder & Chatter held at The Residences on April 9th was a huge success. The food and the company were wonderful and Bob Babineau and Ginny Murray shared many insights about Borderland. A special door prize, an orchid, was won by member and volunteer Paul Berry.

Our April Open House, "The Shot heard Round the World" was a success with children as well as adults. Historical Society members and volunteers, Ken & Dianne Sterling, organized a fun and informative event. Dressed in authentic revolutionary era clothing they spoke about life in Easton during the Revolutionary War. Music, as well as crafts, activities, and treats for children, were available. Representatives from the Daughters of the American Revolution, Deborah Sampson Chapter, were present with information on the DAR as well as genealogy and family history. A very popular open house!

(Pictured on the right: the Sterling family– Ken and Dianne Sterling, Finlay Sterling and Meaghan Baker.)

April 24th Minnie Ames hosted the Directory and Volunteers at Langwater for an informative tour of her family's estate.

Thursday May 1, the 12th annual Day of KindNess was held in memory of OA student and wrestling captain Devin Ness. Oliver Ames seniors helped spruce up the Historical Society and Museum by spreading mulch and clearing out the basement.

May 3rd Stonehill College hosted the 1916 silent film "Snow White" written and produced by Winthrop Ames. This was a collaborative effort between the Ames Free Library, Stonehill College, and the Easton Historical Society and Museum. The film was shown at Stonehill College's Hemingway Theater, accompanied by a live score for harp and viola, written and performed by musicians from Seattle, Washington.

Saturday May 17th a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the planned Tricentennial Garden at the Easton Historical Society and Museum. The new garden, which memorializes Easton's 300th anniversary, is a community partnership of the Easton Garden Club and the Easton Historical Society and Museum, with additional funding provided by the Easton Cultural Council, the Easton Legacy Fund, the Ames Tool Company, and the Easton community. Taking part in the groundbreaking ceremony were Linda Thomson-Clem, Chair of the Tricentennial Garden Committee, Ken Michel, President of the Easton Historical Society and Museum, and David Ames, President of the Easton Legacy Fund. Also present were Ruth Riske, Landscape Designer, David Clifton, Chair of the Tricentennial Committee, Craig Barger, Selectboard Representative, and board members of the various organizations involved.

Shown here (left to right) at the groundbreaking ceremony are: Lyn Feeney, Co-President Easton Garden Club, Ken Michel, President Easton Historical Society and Museum, Linda Thomson-Clem, Chair of the Tricentennial Garden Committee, David Ames, President of the Easton Legacy Fund, Easton Garden Club, Landscape Designer Ruth Riske, and Cindy Lemish, Co-President Easton Garden Club.

On May 13 & 14 Easton's second graders from Blanche A. Ames Elementary School visited the Easton Historical Society and Museum with their teachers. Jonathan Coe, Ken Michel, Ed Hands, Ginny Murray, Ken and Dianne Sterling all shared information with the students about Blanche Ames, the Museum, the Governor Ames property and the shovel shop buildings. Another group of students from the fifth grade came on June 3rd for a tour.

Saturday, May 17th, Ken Michel made a presentation on 'Easton's Call to Military Service' at the Lion's Club Tricentennial event "Celebration of Easton History".

At May's Open House (May 18) a video from the archives was shown. The 2006 episode was a taping of a Chowder & Chatter event. Ed Hands acted as moderator as the following four guests spoke about growing up in Easton: John Kent, Lou Silva, Avery Lee Williams, and Debbie Coe Luke. Great first-hand accounts of life in Easton during an earlier time, reminding us how much our world has changed.

Jon Coe led the Rhode Island Book Club on a walking tour of Sheep Pasture on May 20th. The inspiration was The Path by Easton resident Chet Raymo.

The Victorian Society, as part of their tour of historical architecture in the northeast, conducted their annual tour of H.H. Richardson buildings and Unity Church on June 6th with Ken Michel and Jon Coe assisting.

TWO BIG UPCOMING EVENTS CELEBRATING EASTON'S 300TH BIRTHDAY-

On June 14th several events will take place at Oliver Ames High School– a picnic, concert and flag ceremony, and anniversary fireworks.

On July 12th, the Easton Historical Society and Museum will participate in the Easton 300 parade. We will be riding in a replica trolley.

MACRIS

There is a great tool available to Easton residents that sheds light on buildings, both well-known and not, in town; it is known as MACRIS. MACRIS is the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System. If you are looking for Information on your home, your neighborhood, or Easton's unique historic buildings, MACRIS might be able to help. It is an online tool that has information about historic properties. The data is collected from various files and records maintained by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, including local historical societies. Members and former members of the Easton Historical Society and Historical Commission have worked hard to create MACRIS entries for many local buildings. Researchers include John Kent, Edmund Hands, Hazel Varella, and Ken Jackson. Currently Easton entries number 1174. Some buildings and homes have a great deal of historical information attached to them; others have very little. Some have none. Keep in mind updates are made when available and the database is a work in progress.

An example. This house, known as the Nahum & Eliza Pratt House & Barn, (also the Drake, Barzillai and Rebecca S. Kimball - Williams, Thomas and Nancy Clapp House) is located at 64 Prospect Street, is a single-family residence and was built about 1823.

Included in MACRIS is an architectural description as well as information about ownership through the decades. "The Nahum & Eliza Pratt House is a one-story wood frame single dwelling with a gable roof built in ca. 1823. It represents a break from the traditional New England plan with the removal of the central chimney and replacing it with end chimneys and a central hall. The resulting plan is one room deep with a one-story wing engaged to the center of the back wall and accessible from the center hall with a kitchen and cooking hearth in the front and work areas in the rear. A five -bay front façade with a center entrance mirrors the old house form, but the absence of the center chimney is a significant transformation in the exterior appearance. The current doorway, sidelights and surround were added in the late 20th century; window sash has been replaced. A shallow eave and cornice distinguishes the roof line; eaves are tight on the end walls. The south end has two windows both on the first story and in the attic; the rear window on that end has been replaced with an oriel." Ownership of 64 Prospect Street is traced from Nahum Pratt (1823) to the Drake family, then the Williams family, the Mowatt family, the Rowe, Hands, Sargent, and Goldsmith families. This last in 1983.

The property above left, 14 Center Street, has been through many incarnations. First known as the J.B. King Boot Factory (ca 1885), later Kelley Hardware, it "a rare surviving example of an early 20th-century commercial building housing a store, merchandise storage and a theater. The building originated as a boot factory; it also is an early example of adaptation and reuse." More recently it has been Pires Hardware, Paint Rust & Pixie Dust (a craft and gift shop) and currently Northeastern Trade Services. There is quite a bit of information on the history of this building. On the other hand, the E.J.W. Morse threadmill dam, pictured on the right, has no information attached. (https://mhc-macris.net/)

Donations

Monetary donations were made by Harold and Patricia Bailey, Barbara Beech, Christine Salmon, Duncan and Carol Oliver, Michael Bergeron, Stephen Freitas, Gail Starkey, Rachel Rhodes, Jack Mowatt, Karen Conant Woodard, Grace Healey, Michael Farrell, Sharon E. Graves, Cindy Lemish, Fred Almquist, Geraldine Brown, Matthew Soeldner, Rita Pope, Francis Ialenti, Heather Luke, Christopher Cooney, Leslie and Marcia Hirsch Janice and William Lyttle, Douglas Smith, Jack and Nancy DeLuca, Thomas and Janet Montanaro, Robert A. Silva, Leon Lombardi, Carol Ann Thompson, Robert and Ellen Sheridan, Ruth Albert, Lois Frey, Maureen Yachimski, Steven and Donna Anderson, Carol, Misiewicz, Evelyn Johnson, Ken Nykiel, Rosemary Greene, Diane Silva, Priscilla Crane, Mark Streton, Minnie Ames, Kristen Olean, Joanne Keith, Donna Costa, Kerry Pires, John Schuller, George Comeaux, Sandra Day, Michele and Roger Blake, Steve and Debra Salisbury, Kristina McGill.

IN MEMORIAM

Easton, March 27, 2025. **Hazel Luke Varella**, age 92, beloved educator for over 60 years. Born December 17, 1932, in Beverly, MA, she graduated from Oliver Ames High School in 1950. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in education at Bridgewater State College as well as a master's degree in history at Boston University. She was hired by the Easton School Department in 1956 and taught in various Easton schools until 1997. She was chair of the Oliver Ames Social Studies Department for 33 years, and the Social Studies office was subsequently named in her honor. After retiring from Oliver Ames High School, she taught at Stonehill College, Bridgewater State University, and Curry College for over 20 years. A trustee of the North Easton Savings Bank for many years, she was also secretary of the board of the Ames Free Library, Easton Historical Society, and the Village Cemetery for decades. In 2022, the Bridgewater State University Alumni Association presented her with the Nicholas Tillinghast award for achievement in the field of public education. In 2023, the Easton Historical Society gave her a lifetime achievement award.

Hazel is survived by her two sons, John David Varella (Amanda) of Easton, and James Robert Varella of Dania Beach, Florida, and her two grandchildren, Emma Katherine Varella and John Alexander Varella of Easton. She is also survived by her sister-in-law, Deborah Coe Luke, and many nephews and nieces. She was preceded in death by her husband of 59 years, Manuel David ("Dave") Varella, her parents, John and Olivia (MacDonald) Luke and her brothers and sisters-in-law: John MacDonald ("Jack") Luke and his wife Judy (Jackman), George MacDonald Luke, and James MacDonald ("Jim") Luke and his wife Bonnie (Greely).

Abel William "Bill" Camara, 85, of Rockville, Maryland passed away on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at his residence. Born on July 1, 1939 in North Easton, Massachusetts, he was the son of the late Isabel (nee Correia) and John Camara. Bill graduated from Oliver Ames High School in 1957 and went on to receive a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics from Boston College in 1961. Bill accepted a job in Carderock, MD at the David Taylor Model Basin, Naval Ship Research and Development Center. He spent his entire 35 year career working there, retiring in 1996. Bill is survived by his wife of 57 years, Ardath A. (nee Tomesch) Camara and their children Deborah (Michael) Kunzer, David (Katrina) Camara, and Dinis (Johanna) Camara; grandchildren, and siblings Evangeline Crocker, John E. Camara, Joseph Camara, Alice Camara, Linda Amorim, and Gloria Walsh; and extended family. Bill was preceded in death by his parents John and Isabel Camara and his siblings John Camara, Mary Rose, Celeste Dahlborg, and Ernest Camara.

Edward P. Lomer, 92, of North Easton, passed away on March 27, 2025. Born in Boston, he proudly resided in the same family home in Easton since 1934. Eddie attended the Franklin School in Brockton and graduated from the machine shop vocational program at Oliver Ames High School. He worked for Boston Gear Works for 16 years before beginning his 30+ year career with Warren E. Collins in Braintree where he remained until retirement. An avid motorcyclist, his moniker "Fast Eddie" was known throughout the US. Eddie was the longtime companion of Grace "Lorraine" Connors of North Easton; father of Lisa Lomer and Christine Rosecrans; grandfather of Emily Rosecrans; and a dear cousin and friend of many.

Evelyn M. Dupont, 77, a lifelong resident of Easton, passed away on May 14, 2025. She was the loving wife of William R. Kraus. Evelyn was born in Brockton, daughter of the late John A. and Mary E. (Santos). Raised in Easton, she was a graduate of Oliver Ames High School Class of 1965. Evelyn was employed by the Town of Easton for 47 years and worked at the Easton Middle School as School Guidance Secretary. A longtime member of the Easton Historical Society and the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Evelyn enjoyed traveling and gardening and was an avid animal enthusiast. In addition to her husband William, she is survived by a step-son Kyle Kraus and his wife Joanna of Las Vegas, NV; sister-in-law Dorothy Dupont of CT, several nieces and nephews and grandnieces and grandnephews. She was the sister of the late John A. Dupont, Jr. George Dupont and Mary Dupont.

During the July 12th Tricentennial parade in Easton look for the replica of an antique trolley sponsored by the Easton Historical Society and Museum. Two of the old trolleys that serviced Easton residents at the turn of the century are pictured here on Turnpike Street. It's interesting that Easton installed three trolley lines before the city of London installed them. A branch of the Brockton Street Railway Company brought the first trolley to Easton in 1896. It ran from the site of the old King's Department store down Torrey Street to Main Street, past Dailey's Corner and on to Main Street's junction with Center Street.

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