

Easton Historical Society
1948—2008
Celebrating 60 years of history

Train Tracks



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.

Springing Into Action

Believe it or not, spring is nearly here, and it is time to get busy! Inside you will find a variety of information about recent and upcoming events. We are in the planning stages for a 60th anniversary gala. Your Chowder and Chatter reservation form is inside as well. Thanks to Lee and Kevin Williams for their continued generosity and support. Also inside is information about Chet Raymo's walk and talk at the NRT of Easton. Sadly, we also note the passing of two beloved members, former Senator Oliver F. Ames and Mae Brooks. However, we also celebrate with Veronica Carter on her 100th birthday. Read on!

2008 DUES LETTERS MAILED

Your dues letters for 2008 are in the mail. This year, we have included a look at some of our accomplishments in 2007 and a glimpse of plans for this year. Please be sure to return your dues at the earliest opportunity. They are an important part of supporting what we do. Many, many thanks to those of you who have already renewed or recently joined. If your address label has a 2008 on it, you are all set. Thank you, and we look forward to a great 2008!

2nd Annual Train Day to be Held May 18th

Join us at the Station for a special open house focused on our beautiful building, the former Old Colony Railroad Station. You know the building is one of five H. H. Richardson buildings in North Easton. You may know that it was landscaped by F. L. Olmsted. But do you know why Easton has this architectural treasure in its midst? When were the first tracks put down? Who brought them here, and why? What happened to the first train that stopped in Easton? The answers to these and other questions will be revealed to you during your visit with us. Watch the Easton Journal for information about this exciting day!

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March 2008

CALENDAR

Sunday, March 9th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M. Display on Ice Cutting

Sunday, March 9th, Daylight Savings Time Begins

Thursday, April 3rd, Chowder and Chatter at Southeastern Regional, 6 P.M. "Eastoner's helping Eastoner's." Details and order form on the inside!

Sunday, April 13th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M.

Sunday, April 27th, Joint Meeting at the NRT of Easton, featuring Professor and Author Chet Raymo. Walk at 1:30 P.M., Talk at 3 P.M. See details inside!

Saturday, May 3rd, Spring Bottle and Can Drive at the Station, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M.

Sunday, May 11th, Happy Mother's Day! No Open House

Sunday, May 18th, Open House at the Station, 1-5 P.M. 2nd Annual Train Day!

Coming this fall, 60th Anniversary Celebration. Watch for exciting details!

The Easton Historical Society Newsletter "Train Tracks" is published quarterly by the Easton Historical Society.

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Curator—Frank T. Meninno

The Station Master

President Deborah MacPhee

I am honored to announce that The Easton Historical Society will reach an important milestone in 2008, turning 60!

The Easton Historical Society was formed by a group of Easton's most distinguished citizens in 1948 who felt steps needed to be taken to preserve the history of our town. During the early years of The Society, meetings were often held in Frothingham Memorial Hall and the membership grew over time. Mr. Daniel Buckley, an attorney in town, was the Society's first President, serving a 2 year term. Mrs. Irene Smith, Librarian for the Ames Free Library, jump-started The Society's conservation efforts when she had a safe placed in the basement of the Library to house our growing archives collection. The safe and ever-expanding collection moved to our current home at The Former Old Colony Train Station in 1969. The Station was a generous gift to The Society from the late State Senator Oliver Ames, the late Mr. David Ames, the late John S. Ames Jr. and the late William A. Parker.

We are in the preliminary stages of planning a Gala to celebrate our 60th anniversary. The hope of the entire Board of Directors of The Society is that this fall 2008 event will serve as another opportunity for our members to gather and celebrate the history of Easton.

In my recent letter to you that accompanied the dues notice, I highlighted The Society's accomplishments in 2007 and plans for 2008, so I will not reiterate those here. I would like to thank you for your continued support of The Society. We are blessed to live in a town with such a rich history and we are committed to passing this history along to future generations through our educational outreach programs and member activities.

Please join our Curator, Frank Meninno and I at the next open house held at the Station on March 9, 2008 from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. We are preparing a display on ice-cutting, from the days before refrigeration up to the 1960's when Fred Monte's operation on Elm Street, the last ice house in Easton (and all of New England), finally closed.

Curator's Corner

Curator / Caretaker Frank T. Meninno

I recently found myself thinking about how fortunate the Society has been over the past sixty years. Many people have had an impact on the collections. There are those of you who have been curators before me, and who have done such a great job of collecting and displaying Easton's unique history. Upon further reflection, I realized that each and every one of you who has ever donated an item, ever told us a story, ever allowed us to copy precious family photographs deserves special mention. I couldn't possibly begin to name names without missing someone, so I won't.

There are, however, a group of people who have gone somewhat un-noticed, and deserve recognition. They are the people who many years ago decided to save various items from Easton's early days. Be it was an old photograph, or a relic from days gone by; a written diary or journal or a cache of letters; sentimental or just too much of a Yankee to throw anything away, these early "curators" passed things down from generation to generation. When the Society began meeting in 1948, these items and stories were freely contributed to form the basis of today's outstanding collection of historic Easton items. As we celebrate this year, I am thankful for the foresight displayed by these generous savers and givers, and I am thankful as well for all of you who continue that tradition.

OLIVER F. AMES
OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY ON THE PASSING OF THE
“ DESIGNATED FAMILY PATRIARCH”

Easton and the Easton Historical Society mourn the passing of one of its strongest supporters November 23rd. Former State Senator Oliver Filley Ames was one of the four Ameses who bought the former H. H. Richardson Old Colony Railroad Station in 1969 and gave it to the Historical Society. Twenty years later when the station's slate roof had to be repaired, he made a very generous donation to facilitate it. During the past few years he was present to honor his friend Judge Leon J. Lombardi and spoke at the tribute to his aunt Mrs. Mary Ames Frothingham and her exquisite rose garden.

His humbleness was reflected May 7, 1997 when he accepted the Frederick Law Olmsted Cup at the annual Preservation Awards of Historic Massachusetts dinner. In his acceptance speech as the “designated family patriarch” he indicated modestly that the honor belonged to past generations of the family and the role of the current generation was to sustain Olmsted's vision. Also, when he discussed his World War II naval experiences, he was very humble. Being the recipient of the Bronze Star Medal with Combat “V”, Navy Unit Commendation, and the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Ribbon with six battle stars documents his significant military contributions. He was honored when he was asked to speak at the dedication of the Veterans Memorial Park in 2004. His sister-in-law Mrs. David Ames and he donated the Park's flagpole and flag.

His commitment to Easton was also evident by his extensive involvement and advice to the Easton Community Corporation, the Village Cemetery Corporation, Natural Resources Trust of Easton, the Stonehill Industrial History Center including the Arnold B. Tofias Archives and the Ames Family Papers, and other organizations. His deep interest in the environment and conservation also resulted in Mrs. Ames's and his donation of nineteen plus acres of land to the Easton Conservation Commission including Langwater Pond. Mr. Ames and his sister-in-law Mrs. David Ames were chosen to receive the 2007 Chaffin Awards by the Easton Historical Commission.

The Easton Historical Society extends its deepest sympathy to Mrs. Ames, his four children, and five grandchildren. The youngest, Oliver Ames Hirschfield, was born after the passing of the “designated family patriarch” who will be deeply missed.

Donations in memory of Oliver F. Ames may be made to: Francis Ouimet Scholarship Fund, 300 Arnold Palmer Blvd., Norton, MA. 02766.

MAE BROOKS

The Society lost a beloved friend and supporter February 4th, Mrs. Mae Brooks, the widow of Abraham Brooks. She died at the age of 101 in Newton. Mrs. Brooks and her husband were both involved in the revitalization of the Society in the late 1960's. Attorney Brooks worked with the Ames Family to facilitate the gift of the former Old Colony Railroad Station to the Society. Corporation papers, tax issues, etc were handled by him with no expense to the fledgling Society. Whenever the Society needed legal help or just words of wisdom, Mr. and Mrs. Brooks were there. Attorney Brooks provided the former and Mrs. Brooks the latter. Her extraordinary enthusiasm, wisdom, and smile were always an encouragement to the Society.

Her interest and generosity to the Society continued after she moved from their special home, 45 Center Street, after her husband's passing in 1990. Many Society members sent birthday cards on her ninetieth birthday, and the cards and flowers were subsequently presented to her by Ken and Miriam Jackson and Dave and Hazel Varella. An enjoyable afternoon was enjoyed with Mrs. Brooks and her son Robert. On her hundredth birthday Society members were encouraged to donate to their charity of choice in her honor. Several people donated to the Historical Society, and day lilies were planted in her honor around the birdbath on the side of the Station: flowers which symbolized her strength and inner beauty. Our condolences are extended to Robert (Robin) and David and his family.

Donations in memory of Mae Brooks may be made to: Jewish Family and Children's Service, 31 New Chardon St., Boston, MA. 02114-2701.

SPRING BOTTLE AND CAN DRIVE

The Easton Historical Society will hold it's spring bottle and can drive on Saturday, May 3rd from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Station. All clean, returnable bottles and cans are welcome. For pickup, please call Ken Martin at 508-238-2185. Proceeds benefit the heating fund at the Society. Thanks to Ken and his able assistant Ed Hands for running the drive, and thank you for your

HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY!

Congratulations and birthday wishes are in order for Mrs. Veronica Carter, longtime member, past Society treasurer and Easton teacher, who celebrated her 100th birthday in January. She was recently honored at a dinner for retired educators. Mrs. Carter taught business at Oliver Ames High School, and was the business department head for many years. She still enjoys getting out to dinner with friends. Friends and former students wishing to send cards may mail them to: Mrs. Veronica Carter, 149 Lincoln Street, North Easton, MA. 02356. Mrs. Carter is still pretty sharp, and remembers many of her former students. She would love to hear from you.

Enjoy Chet Raymo's Travels

Save Sunday April 27th at 3 P. M. for the Society's joint meeting with the Natural Resources Trust in the Carriage House at "Sheep Pasture". The gifted writer, educator, and naturalist Professor Chet Raymo will discuss his wanderings and writings from The Path, the walk from his home to Stonehill through "Sheep Pasture", to one of his favorite mountains in Ireland, Brandon. His most recent novel Valentine might also be discussed. Plan to enjoy Chet's wonderful commentaries about his experiences. Many of us enjoyed his science column in the Globe for more than twenty years, and his blog "Science Musings" always has fascinating information. A representative from the Stonehill bookstore will be present to sell some of Chet's books which he would be very glad to autograph for you.

Prior to the meeting Chet will lead a walk along The Path for twenty interested Easton Historical Society and NRT members. A donation of fifteen dollars for the organizations involved will be requested. Society members should contact Hazel Varella (238-3614) after April 1st. NRT members will be contacting

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Pocket diary dated 1916, Christian devotional, 1898, 1950's kitchen pamphlets, railroad lantern, photo of three riders on horseback at a horse show, from Karen Fulcher; Antique lantern, from Sandy Medeiros; Pewter Vermont Snowflake, Teddy bear in chair from Maine, from Kay Malley; Bronze WWI soldier figure, from Alice McCarthy; Postcard of our Station, from Jon Gilmore; Various photos and papers about Easton's 250th parade, including parade records and ribbons, from Ernie Camara; Oliver Ames High diploma belonging to Enis Walborg Larson, 1929, Mitrano Chevrolet salt and pepper shakers, school books from 1901 and 1915, from Priscilla Almquist Olsen, Esq.; Antique plum colored taffeta dress worn on Boston Common promenades, DeWitt Lumber papers from 1966, from Charlotte DeWitt; Collection of Eastoners from the 1930's and 1940's belonging to Ruth Copeland Rogers, from Sara Joyal; Eastern Star tablecloth made by Susan Maude Banks, from Norma Jaen Hanscom; Product sample book from Stedfast Rubber, from Burt Lewis; Collection of items including 1800's tax bills, Ames field photos, pilot license and log book from Ames Flying School, and other items, from Nancy Hatchfield; Photo of Ladd's Service Station, from Lee Hill; Area rug for foyer, from Chris and Stephanie Flynn; Photo of man and woman in antique car, Boston Herald article on Talkies and writers, 1931, from Jon Gilmore.

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

2008 CHOWDER AND CHATTER DINNER

The ninth annual "Chowder and Chatter" will be held at the Southeastern Regional High School, 250 Foundry Street, South Easton, on Thursday, April 3rd, at 6 P. M. and again we are the guests of Lee and Kevin Williams. After the delicious meal of chowders, cornbread, beverages, and desserts, the panel discussion will focus on "Eastoners helping Eastoners". How many components of Easton's society assist others will be moderated by Edmund Hands. Representing organizations will be Lee Williams of the Lions Club and Easton businesses will be President and CEO Thomas Deubler of the North Easton Savings Bank. Superintendent of Schools Dr. William Simmons will focus on the many types of gifts to the Easton Public Schools, and Hazel Varella will discuss other sources including the contributions by the Ames Family.

You are asked to make a small donation to help defray the cost of heating the former Old Colony Railroad Station. When you complete the form below, please indicate the names of the people attending (limited to four). As you know, this event is usually completely booked within five days. Members have preference and are asked to mail the form to Hazel Varella ON or AFTER Wednesday, March 12th.

THANK YOU AGAIN LEE AND KEVIN.

2008 Chowder and Chatter Reservation Form

Please use this form to reserve your seat for the Chowder and Chatter dinner. Southeastern Regional High School is conveniently located at 250 Foundry Street (Route 106) in South Easton. Once again, Lee and Kevin Williams have generously offered to underwrite the cost of this event. As in the past, there is no cost to you. However, any donations made will go towards defraying the cost of heating the former Old Colony Railroad Station. Donations by check should be made out to the "Easton Historical Society." Your generosity is very much appreciated!

Seating for this popular event is limited, and member requests will be filled on a first come, first served basis. Any seats left will be made available to the public. Please send this completed form to: Mrs. Hazel Varella, 121 Center Street, North Easton, MA 02356. Thank you!

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____ Email address _____

Number of Seats Requested (limit of 4) _____

Names of Attendees _____

Donation \$ _____

DID YOU KNOW?

The National Monument to the Forefathers, pictured at right, is located appropriately enough in Plymouth, Ma. However, there is a connection between it and a prominent Easton family. Oliver Ames, after he had begun the shovel works in Easton, also worked for a while at a plant in Plymouth making shovels for another company. While in Plymouth, his son Oliver II was born in 1807. Within a few years, work ended at the Plymouth plant, and the family returned to North Easton to focus on the family business.

Now, back to the monument. The base for the monument was begun in 1859. The Civil War caused work to cease, and the project wasn't restarted until 1874. Sometime around that time, Oliver Ames II became involved in the project, never forgetting his hometown. His donation was the marvelous statue of Faith that stands atop the pedestal. The white granite figure stands thirty-six feet tall, and is 216 times life size. The finished piece weighs over 200 tons. Oliver II donated \$32,300 to pay the cost of the statue, a gift to Plymouth from a native son. Sadly, he never saw the completed monument. Work wasn't finished until 1888, eleven years after his death.



EASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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