

# The View from The Crow's Nest



Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Historical Society

Fall 2008 / Issue VIII

Fifty years of preserving the past for the benefit of the future.

## The Great Hurricane of September 1938

The following was taken from a letter written by Annie (Mendell) Tripp describing the events of Wednesday afternoon September 21, 1938. The Tripp residence was located at #8 Mechanic Street.

Now that things are a little more normal, I thought I would write and tell you of what the hurricane and tidal wave did here as I knew it.

Wednesday dawned overcast but at about 3:30 in the afternoon, Patty came in and said "Mother, walk down to the wharf and see the waves." They are always a sight in a Southeaster here, so I did. The wind was blowing hard and lashing the waves so that the spray came way up on the wharf. Several people were down there, as always, watching, while some of the boatmen were putting more mooring lines on their boats at the dock.



Mason Smith's 54' schooner *Clione* ashore on Goodspeed's Island. Her captain, Ben Wentworth, broke his leg trying to save the vessel.



Lewis Stackpole's 10 meter sloop *Astra* high and dry on Goodspeed's Island.

A big two masted schooner was ashore on *Goodspeed's* Island. (She is now on top of the Island and across the railroad tracks, her anchor caught.) The track itself was washed from the roadbed and the water covered the tops of the poles.

Pete, Stackpole's man, could be seen aboard the *Astra*, to help her. (When the hurricane struck, she dragged three anchors and a granite stone right up onto the Island and there she lies, still chained to it.) Pete jumped overboard, finally, after keeping her head on. Two men hauled him into the house on Johnson's Beach (which is now in a hundred bits of bright blue wood in Frank Allie's yard, together with tons of other debris, probably the bath houses.)

Well, aside from the schooner, the other boats seemed to be riding, except Jim Barlow's, already piled up, so I left to go to a Brownie meeting at *Center* School.



Boat at the foot of Pearl Street with Monroe house in the background.

When I came out at 4:30, a hard squall struck, with rain, and I waited in a doorway till it was over. I had Ann Perkins (*Briggs*) with me and when her father and mother came for her they asked me to ride around and see the damage done by falling trees. (So we did – if you can imagine people going for a sight-seeing trip in the path of a hurricane! But no one realized.) The Street Department was already at work cleaning the streets almost as fast as the trees fell.

When we drove down on the wharf, the water was very high and the rain and spray were blinding. We watched Cousin Mattie's bath house blown away by degrees. Then we went to Tobey Lane and when we came back water covered the wharves and the scallop shanties were afloat. The wind was blowing incessantly. Still it wasn't high tide. By now many more people were gathered in the lee of The Village Shop and Munroe's old building. That's what they were waiting for - high tide – for already the damage was beyond that of an ordinary September Gale.



Elms on Water Street- Hurricane of 1938

The Perkins family went home and left me to prepare supper, never dreaming that supper was the last thing in the world that Patty or Bud or anybody would be interested in. There was no gas! But I had cooked a ham at noon so we could have it cold.

Then in came Patty, soaked through again, "Mother, this is history in the making. You've got to come out!" So out we went. By now Water Street, by Lowe's, was flooded. We had to go around and down Barstow. At the foot of the street the wind was terrific and at times, you couldn't face it. The Anchorage Restaurant was just a heap of wreckage with tables and chairs scattered all over Shipyard Park. The salt spray and sand driven by the gale has killed trees and foliage way up past Church Street. (Correction – December, 1938, past Middleboro!)



Sign standing in Shipyard Park at what had been the entrance to the Anchorage Restaurant.

People were clustered in the lee of buildings left standing. It was high tide now and The Sail Loft, containing The Legion and Macacham Club rooms, was a mass of wreckage with the water 12 feet deep in front of cousin Mattie's (Munroe) covering her parlor floor. Jim's *Mauretania* was up to her front steps. Only a tree in front saved Mello's boat from crashing into the main part of her house. Enoch saved his boat by driving her head on and beaching her where she now lies, squarely across *Pearl Street* next to Mrs. Barclay's (*Gibbon's*) in company with the top of the bandstand.



Site of the demolished three story sail loft with wreckage piled high. Houses in background are on Water Street.

We went up Pearl Street by crossing Barclay's yard and looked down between the houses. Main Street was a swirling river and the big Stackpole house was an island in a dreadful looking sea up to its second story. It was all nightmarish and impossible and the wind kept on.

I went down from Pearl Street to see how Aunt Madie Mendell was, and found her entertaining the Brownells (whose house across the street was wrecked) and the tenants from downstairs where the water was 18" over their floor. But she wouldn't leave, however, before dark the water had retreated at least 12 feet from the high water line of debris in her back yard.



Enoch Winslow's boat and top of bandstand at the foot of Pearl Street with the Gibbon's house in the background.

Then we went up Pearl Street and down toward the Town Hall. The men had taken out the fire trucks long before and now the water - the ocean - was up to Baptist Street, entirely surrounding the Town Hall.



Main Street looking north. Note white flagpole on right in front of Town Hall.

Well, after that we went home. There didn't seem to be much point in staying and maybe by now our own windows were blown in! But they weren't and we realized we were hungry. Patty went in to make coffee and I went to reassure Mrs. Souza that the tide had turned.



Lewis Stackpole's house awash during the storm with Mason Smith's *Clione* up on Goodspeed's Island. Picture taken from Main Street by Monroe house.

In came Patty - "no lights - no gas - no coffee!" Well by nine o'clock I had boiled a kettle on some shavings and in came Bud with two other boys, all wet and hungry.

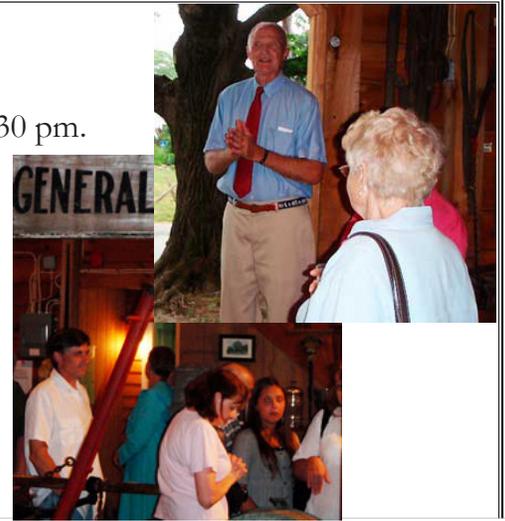
We had coffee and sandwiches and tried to go to bed but couldn't sleep. The telephone kept ringing - Carol Field had her house full of refugees from Antassawamock; Patty mourned the loss of the market; Bud had exciting anecdotes of boats saved only to be lost again.

Finally Clifford came. He left for the station (Water Department) which had been kept running

(continued on page 5)

# Open House June 26, 2008

The annual Open House was held on Thursday, June 26 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. Seth Mendell, Bette Roberts, and other members of the Board of Directors welcomed the public to preview the summer exhibit. The subject of this year's show, curated by Eloise Ricciardelli, was *Toys from Times Past*. The display of dollhouses, theatres, a barn, and other playful items attracted Museum members and friends of all ages. The doors in the carriage shed were opened to the muggy, summer air and guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and wine and punch. The event was a great start to a lively summer.



# Ice Cream Social July 2, 2008

On a beautiful summer evening in July the Society invited the community to an ice cream social. This annual affair attracts young and old alike. Oxford Creamery once again generously donated the delicious vanilla ice cream. The efforts of Eloise Ricciardelli, her grandson Vincent, and the Price children make this a fun, multi-generational event. After enjoying the creamy dessert on the front lawn of the Museum, many visitors toured the summer exhibit.

# Summer Exhibit 2008

These photographs show some of the items from our special summer exhibit *Toys from Times Past*. Doll houses, a horse barn, teddy bears and banks were generously loaned to us to help showcase the museum's collection of children's toys and games.

*Exhibit items loaned by Mary Ellen Bosworth, Ruth Cederberg, Jim Henderson, Mary Beth Morse, Ruth Souza and Dick Young.*



(continued from page 3)

when all power failed (*using a belt from the back wheel of an old Buick.*) He didn't have his clothes off nor sit down to a regular meal for two more days and nights.

The waterfront is desolate. The wharves are swept clean. They are badly pitted. No boats, except the mast of John Christ's sunk at her mooring. Every other one is driven far up onto Main and Water Streets even past the Town Hall.



Boats in Shipyard Park and the wharves swept clean.

No scallop shanties, no fish market, except the cement floor with a large anchor caught in it, no sail loft, its contents including bridge tables and plates, chowder bowls, flags, oil stoves, etc., left high and dry in the once grassy field at the foot of Pearl Street.

No Bandstand, the seats in the park ripped from their cement foundations, no Anchorage Restaurant, no piazza on Lowe's, no rooms under the kitchen - left hanging in mid-air. No public bath houses, no fleet of little Herreshoff's off shore but just wrecks strewn all over the R. L. Barstow lot, no cooper shop, the raft from the Beach going right through the ell of the Barstow house, and so it goes.



Barstow - Hiller House on the corner of North and Water Streets.

I could go on and on telling of the awful destruction at Crescent Beach, the horror of which we are just beginning to realize, the cottages in Mahoney's Lane, swept up into a back yard on Main Street, the Beaches guarded, the whole town bare of onlookers as even buses are excluded, the funny little train abandoned at the depot.



Pearl Street looking north.

But I hope I have given you some of the sensation that struck the little town of Mattapoisett on that September day in 1938.

- Annie O. Tripp

# Toys and Traditions

Area children will be treated to two programs this fall to enrich their understanding of history and traditions. Wendy Goldsmith, art teacher at Friends Academy is back by popular demand. During the past spring, 22 students learned about the ancient art of gyotaku from Wendy. Using (thankfully) rubber fish, they printed cloth bags, t-shirts and created panoramas.



On Sunday, September 28 from 2:00 to 3:30 pm, students in grades 3 to 8 are invited to examine the museum's toy collection. From this, Wendy will have several different projects available so that children can create a toy of their own. For example, they could make a puppet and puppet stand. Perhaps they would prefer to make doll furniture or decorate a set of blocks. All materials will be provided.

On Sunday, November 30 from 2:00 to 3:30 pm, children will gather to create holiday decorations from the past. Katherine Gaudet, Museum Vice President, will host this second annual event. Last year, participants strung popcorn, made chains and cornucopias, and created tinfoil decorations. This year will hold more surprises as well as refreshments and caroling.

These events are made possible through the generosity of an anonymous donation so that the Museum can enrich the lives of area children and deepen their understanding of history.

Please call the Museum at 508-758-2844 to pre-register for these events.

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## Ghosts from King Philip's War

Hauntings \* Mysteries \* Curiosities

Author and historian Edward Lodi will talk about ghosts and unsolved mysteries associated with King Philip's War on November 2, 2008 at 2:00 pm. While researching Ghosts from King Philip's War, Lodi visited numerous haunted sites locally and throughout New England and spent many hours in libraries and museums. The result: nearly three dozen stories of hauntings, pirates, witches, and little known facts about the war. Lodi, who draws his inspiration from New England fact and folklore, is the author of twenty books, including Moonlight Harvest: Haunted Cranberry Bogs of Cape Cod and Plymouth County, Witches of Plymouth County, The Haunted Violin, and Nantucket Sleigh-Ride: A Notebook of Nautical Expressions. He is currently researching material for two additional books on King Philip's War.

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## Mattapoissett History on DVD



As part of the Mattapoissett Historical Society's 50th Anniversary celebration, and in conjunction with a grant from the the United Way of Greater New Bedford's Community Building Mini-Grants Program, the Society is videotaping Seth Mendell's lectures on the history of Mattapoissett. The filming sessions, conducted by Don Cuddy and Michelle Bissonnette, will be open to the public and the DVDs will also be available to the public. Times and locations of the taping of the lectures will appear in the Wanderer and be posted on the Society's website at [www.mattapoissetthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.mattapoissetthistoricalsociety.org).

# Curator's Corner

By Bette Roberts

Thanks to a really great exhibit, we had a successful summer at the museum. Approximately 325 people from 16 states and 2 foreign countries visited us to enjoy the "Toys From The Past" exhibit.

Thanks also go to the many docents who welcomed our visitors and to the folks who loaned us their doll houses and toys.

A special thank you to Don Cuddy for the great coverage in "Coastin'" and to our Exhibit Committee for their hard work in mounting this exhibit.

## Fall/Winter 2008/2009

### Save the Dates

**Sunday, September 28**

2:00 pm Children's Toy Workshop

**Sunday, November 2**

2:00 pm Ghost Stories with Ed Lodi

**Sunday, November, 30**

2:00 pm Christmas Crafts for Children

**Sunday, December 7**

2:00 pm Christmas Open House

**Sunday, February 8**

2:00 pm Mattapoissett History by Seth

**Coming in March, 2009**

Lucy Bly and Katherine Gaudet gossip about the notorious Hetty Green.

### Word Search By Lisa Hill

#### Wharves

Village, Ned's Point and Cannonville

A L M K G O A M L D O R  
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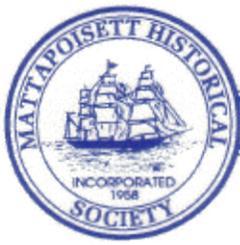
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Bette Roberts



## MATTAPOISETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Thank you for your generous support.

### *Can you identify this object?*



*Find the answer on our website at  
[www.mattapoissetthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.mattapoissetthistoricalsociety.org).*

**A note to all members that membership renewal envelopes have recently been mailed. Please call the Museum if you did not receive yours. We thank you for your continued support.**