

The View from

The Crow's Nest



Newsletter of the Mattapoissett Historical Society

June 2016 / Issue XXVI

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

Exploring Mattapoissett's Hidden Collections

by **Lenora Robinson**

Finished! I breathed a sigh of relief as I closed Document Box 35 after describing several folders of research into the village of Cannonville, using the last hours allotted by the 2015 CPC grant for cataloging the collections at Mattapoissett Historical Society. I had finally completed this year's project to organize and document Charles S. Mendell Jr.'s collections of paperwork, saved by the founder of the museum. The collection is a mixture of materials: Mendell's own research papers, books, manuscripts, newspaper clippings and deeds, various correspondence, and many other scraps of paper. The majority are from between 1850 and 1950, but some date back to the late 18th century. These historically significant papers were stored in crumbling folders and an old, metal 4-drawer filing cabinet. The intent of the project was to move the aging materials to new archival quality folders and boxes for preservation, and to catalog them so the information could be used by researchers and residents of Mattapoissett.

My declaration of completion was short-lived, however.

President Jennifer McIntire brought me up to the eaves area in the Carriage House to get my "gut reaction" to several boxes that contained none other than correspondence and papers that greatly resembled much of what I'd just finished cataloging. So, no, not quite done with Mendell's collections yet.

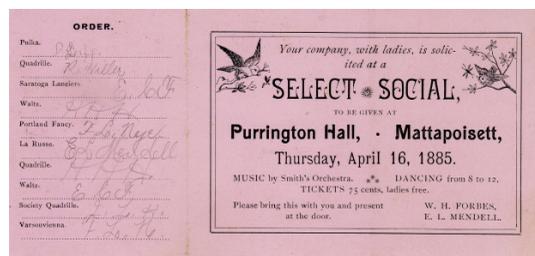


A calling card for Ms. Hattie M. Mendall, c. 1875. (0000.8.1397)

During this process of organizing and cataloging the documents, I did find quite a few interesting items that give in-depth views into Mattapoissett and its history. There are dance cards and calling cards, invitations and programs for dances and concerts at Shipyard Park, and boat races in the harbor that provided some activities to include in this year's recreation-themed summer exhibit.

In addition, there is extensive information, photographs, script drafts and layouts, correspondence, and booklets collected during the planning of the celebrations, pageants, and parades celebrating the 75th and 100th anniversaries of the incorporation of Mattapoissett (1932 and 1957, respectively). Charles Mendell Jr. wrote

his own booklet on Mattapoissett shipbuilders, published by the Old Dartmouth Historical Society in 1937. His research into Mattapoissett vessels include hand-written scraps of paper of articles copied from the Whalemens Shipping Lists, letters, excerpts from voyage logs and crew lists, receipts for outfitting ships, and deeds of areas around Mattapoissett where shipbuilding occurred. There are letters, logs, and daybooks from various captains including Seth Freeman, George Mosher, Ansel Weeks, and others aboard whaling and merchant ships.



A dance card for an event held at Purrington Hall in 1885. (0000.8.908)

(continued on next page)



Exploring Mattapoissett's Hidden Collections (continued from cover)



There are also myriad newspaper clippings with articles on the devastation of the hurricanes and joys of the centennial celebrations, on ships and whaling, obituaries, and other articles on notable Mattapoissett residents; like the 'Purrington Birthday Club', a group of eight Purringtons, some of the oldest residents at the time. Birthday club articles include an obituary of George Purrington Jr., the first member to pass away at 89, and an announcement of birthday celebrations for Mrs. Ellis Purrington, who at 72 years old, was the 'baby' of the group. There are letters from various Mendells, Purringtons, Hammonds, Holmes, LeBarons, and many other easily-recognized Mattapoissett names. One letter, written to Olivia 'Livia' Purrington from

Program from the Fourth of July celebration in 1929. (0000.8.880)

her friend Jennie, was sent on April 20, 1865, just days after Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, painting a picture of her realization while running errands in town that the president was dead:

In one of Mr. L's letters he says "I wrote you Sunday night after the battle. The next morning we marched into Petersburg, halted by the road-side and let Abraham pass by. We cheered him lustily".

Ah, how it brought tears to my eyes when I read it! For then the great, and good "Abraham" was dead. His soldiers will cheer him no more. And I envy them their remembrance of that beloved face, and of that remarkable man, the fame of whose martyred name is only to be rivalled in the history of the nation, by that of the Father, Washington. I often think of the first year of Lincoln's administration, when the people were all crying out for a Jackson, an Andrew Jackson in Washington. And behold a greater than he was there. I shall never forget that Saturday morning, now so memorable in history. Lost and dispirited by long waiting and disappointment, absorbed in my own anxieties I did not even notice on my way to the P.O. how singularly the men gathered in groups, or wonder why all the bells were tolling. Not a suspicion of the truth dawned upon me until I read the terrible tragedy upon the Bulletin Board. I would not realize it then, until the city was dressed in mourning, business suspended, flags floating at half-mast, and the beloved picture draped in mourning at nearly every window.

But Livia, you and I find comfort in the thought that though they have been seeking his life four years, the Lord has permitted him to live to enter the [Rebel] Capitol, and thrust aside the blow, until he had answered every purpose of his creation. We do not now see, but we know that in the future it will be proved, "All is well." (0000.8.1462)

We learned on May 9 that the CPA grant was approved for another year. There are hundreds of years of history contained at the Historical Society, but so much is undocumented and hidden. This grant extension allows for more of these gems to be uncovered for all of Mattapoissett to learn from and enjoy. I can't wait to see what I find next!

Docents Needed!

Do you have a spare hour here and there over the summer? Become a docent! An hour or two of your time would make all the difference in giving our museum visitors a welcoming and enjoyable experience. No qualifications required – merely an enthusiastic, friendly manner and a desire to help out, as you greet visitors and show them around the museum. Meet new people and share with them your love of Mattapoissett and its fantastic history!

We are in need of volunteers to fill slots throughout July and August. Even an hour of your time makes a difference, so please consider lending a hand. If you would like to be a docent, please get in touch by emailing mattapoissett.museum@verizon.net or calling 508-758-2844.



Your Story - Open Mic Event

by Jennifer McIntire

The Mattapoisett Historical Society's first ever open mic event was a huge success! All in attendance were moved and entertained by the fabulous performers. Spectators listened to poetry, stories, and music. Those who took the mic brought us on an emotional journey ranging from poignant to hilarious. We also vicariously traveled to Ireland, the Philippines, France, the Atlantic Ocean, Raynham, and Eel Pond. Eleven performers shared their talents with us: Alex Macallister, Heidi Dube, Ellen Flynn, Georgia Sparling, Tom Waldron, Liam Waldron, Thomas Waldron, Lisa Hill, Katherine Gaudet, and Ann Briggs. Alex Macallister chose popular and appropriately encouraging music for her clarinet performance such as Billy Joel's *Just the Way You Are* and Katy Perry's *Firework*. Heidi Dube recited two of her own poems. Georgia Sparling had us laughing as she shared an inspiring adventure biking in the Philippines. Tom Waldron and his sons sang a humorous Irish song and then Tom shared a poem his grandfather wrote to say farewell to a young Irish woman leaving her remote village for America. Ann Briggs captivated the audience with her memoir poem involving a young girl, a rock and a hawk.

We were all on the edge of our seats as Ellen Flynn took us on a harrowing sailing adventure. Katherine Gaudet made many eyes tear up as she shared her story of her kindly nanny in France who was deeply grateful to generous American soldiers at the end of WWII. Lisa Hill had us all laughing again with a story involving an unused, labor-intensive swimming pool, an impulsive solution to the pool's existence, and a resilient marriage. At the end of the afternoon many in attendance voiced their eagerness to perform at or attend the next open mic event. It seems we should do it again!



A rapt audience at Your Story in April.

If you would like to perform at our next open mic, please call 508-758-2844 or send an email to (mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net).

Historical Societies Hosted a Free Movie Night

by Jennifer McIntire

On April 3 the Mattapoisett Historical Society teamed up with Sippican, Rochester, Freetown, and Wareham Historical Societies to bring the movie *Peter & John* to the local community. The film was shown at the Music Hall in Marion. Kingdom County director Jay Craven created a screenplay he adapted from Guy de Maupassant's 19th-century seaside novel, *Pierre et Jean*. The book introduced intense psychological complexity into its naturalistic depiction of a family brought to the breaking point through startling revelations. *Peter & John* is set in 1872 Nantucket, after the demise of the whaling industry, before the rise of tourism, and in the wake of the still-reverberating Civil War.

The event created an opportunity for the historical societies to share their pamphlets, publications and programs with a larger crowd. We made announcements about upcoming events at all five organizations. The plan is to provide links on one another's websites and to collaborate again in the near future.

Odd Objects

Do you know what this is?

The answer can be found on the last page.

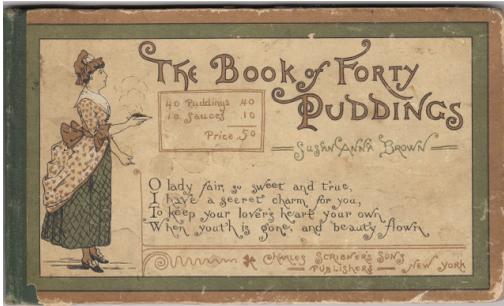




Curator's Corner

by Jeffrey Miller

Well, the spring really flew by this year, and it is almost time for summer already! We've had some great events this season, including a terrific open mic session. It was so popular we may try to do it again soon. We also recently held a very successful yard sale – this was a great way to offload some items that were cluttering up the museum and office. There has been a lot going on behind the scenes too, as we prepare for a busy summer. Our special exhibit, *Mattapoissett Fun: Celebrate Summer*, is looking fantastic, so be sure to stop by to see it in July and August. Also check out our upcoming events and mark your calendars for some summer fun!



The Book of Forty Puddings by Susan Anna Brown, published 1882.

We continue to make progress on cataloguing, though much still remains to be done. Some of the funding we receive from the Community Preservation Act will go towards new book shelves upstairs in the Rowland Research Room, which will free up some space and better preserve these delicate items. In the meantime, however, they all need to be organized and catalogued! There are some real treasures in our book collection, such as *The Book of Forty Puddings*, *Harrison's Companion for the Toilet*, and *What's Cooking in Mattapoissett*, as well as children's books, town records, and tomes on genealogy, shipbuilding, and local history. We will also be upgrading our database in the coming months, and soon it will be accessible online, so keep an eye on our website so you can browse the collection yourself!

Earlier this year we did our first electronic-only Crow's Nest. If we don't have your email address make sure we get it so you don't miss out on anything!

Mattapoissett Fun: Celebrate Summer!

by Jennifer McIntire

Our summer exhibit "Mattapoissett Fun: Celebrate Summer" opens on Friday, July 1 (our member preview is on June 30). The exhibit explores recreation in Mattapoissett from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Summertime traditions in Mattapoissett endure largely due to the dedication and efforts of individuals and organizations with a spirit of volunteerism and a commitment to the community. Our small-town community doubles in population in summer. Year-round residents and summer folk take advantage of the town's beautiful seaside location: boating, swimming, playing golf, playing tennis, running, biking, and dancing. This *carpe diem* approach to summer has been the collective attitude since at least the early 1900s.

The exhibit will be open Wednesdays through Saturdays from 1:00 - 4:00 pm, July 1 to August 27. Don't miss the fun!



Early 20th-century photograph of some Mattapoissett residents enjoying a day out.

VOLUNTEER If you have an hour or two a week and are looking for an interesting and fun way to spend some time, please join our year round Volunteer Program. Are you interested in:

- ◆ Exhibits
- ◆ Collections Management
- ◆ Office Administration
- ◆ Public Relations
- ◆ Research
- ◆ Museum Shop
- ◆ Programs (public and school groups)

If you have a particular interest, we have a need! Please email mattapoissett.museum@verizon.net or call (508) 758-2844 with any questions. We look forward to hearing from you!



Massachusetts Cultural Council

Our programs are supported in part by a grant from the Mattapoissett Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



Calendar of Events

Summer 2016

- June 30** **Special Exhibit Member's Preview** (5:00 - 6:30 pm) Come be the first to see our special summer exhibit! For member's only.
- July 1** **Mattapoisett Fun: Celebrate Summer** Our annual summer exhibit is open from July 1 through August 27, Wednesday through Saturday 1:00 - 4:00 pm. Visit the museum to learn about the history of recreation in Mattapoisett, including boating, biking, running, dancing and more!
- July 6** **Ice Cream Social** (6:15 pm) Celebrate summer with a nice ice cream treat before heading to the band concert in Shipyard Park. Free, donations accepted. Rain Date Wednesday, July 13. Ice cream generously donated by the Oxford Creamery.
- July 16** **Walking Tour of historic Mattapoisett Village** (2:00 pm) Learn about historic buildings, the electric rail, the saltworks on Goodspeed's Island, the Charles King Mansion at the mouth of the river, and "The Dude Special." Visualize the building of whale ships in the park and how the British attempted to burn the shipyards during the War of 1812. The duration of the walk is approximately one hour and a quarter.
- July 20** **Mattapoisett Historical Society Open House** (5:00 - 6:30 pm) Come see our newest acquisitions, including a fantastically detailed scale model of a 26' Brownell Bass boat. A free event open to all.
- July 30** **Walking Tour of Historic Mattapoisett Village** (2:00 pm) See above.
- August 4** **The Great Community Picnic** (6:00 - 9:00 pm) Join the Mattapoisett Historical Society and the Mattapoisett Land Trust for *The Great Community Picnic* at Munro Park in Mattapoisett. We will provide tables, chairs, tablecloths, cash bar, and music. Bring your own food, utensils, and plates. Creatively transform your table with flowers, napkins, etc. Tables will be sold for 4 (\$80), 6 (\$120), and 8 (\$160) diners. Buy a table and invite your friends or get your friends to pitch-in (\$20 per diner). It will be a fun and memorable event for the community. Space is limited – buy a table while they last! For tickets, call 508-758-2844.
- August 13** **Walking Tour of Historic Mattapoisett Village** (2:00 pm) See above.
- August 16** **WWI Lecture Series: Prologue and Outbreak of War** (7:00 pm at the Mattapoisett Free Public Library.) Seth Mendell gives with a broad overview of the nations of Europe as they were in the last half of the 19th century, and the circumstances that led to the outbreak of war in 1914.
- August 23** **WWI Lecture Series: The Opening Phases – Strategies and Battle** (7:00 pm at the Mattapoisett Free Public Library.) "Let the last man on the right brush the channel with his sleeve." Seth Mendell describes the failure of the initial German offensive, how the British Gallipoli Campaign was devised, and the importance of naval forces to the conflict.
- August 30** **WWI Lecture Series: Middle Phases – Major Battles and Events** (7:00 pm at the Mattapoisett Free Public Library.) Seth Mendell continues his fascinating tale of WWI by examining how some of the war's most notable battles and events played out in the context of changing warfare practices in the early 20th century.
- September 4** **Lecture: History of Naushon Island** (7:00 pm at the Mattapoisett Free Public Library.) Seth Mendell will trace the colorful history of Naushon Island including the pirates and village at Tarpaulin Cove, the British during the American Revolution, the arrival of John Murray Forbes and the settlement at Hadley's Harbor.
- September 6** **WWI Lecture Series: United States Entry – The Russian Revolution** (7:00 pm at the Mattapoisett Free Public Library.) In his fourth lecture, Seth Mendell outlines the circumstances that brought the US into the war and the impact of Lenin's ascendance in Russia.
- September 13** **WWI Lecture Series: Ploughboys into Doughboys – Collapse of Central Powers** (7:00 pm at the Mattapoisett Free Public Library.) This final entry of Seth Mendell's WWI series focuses on the American side of the conflict and the eventual surrender of Germany and the Central Powers.

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Unless otherwise noted, all events are at the Mattapoisett Historical Society, 5 Church Street, Mattapoisett.



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SUPPORT YOUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Mattapoissett Historical Society is a not-for profit 501(c) (3) educational institution, chartered in 1958. The Historical Society relies on private funding to support its mission. Donations through the Annual Appeal, membership and additional funding supports a wide variety of Programs and activities for schools, families, adults and children, engaging exhibits which explore Mattapoissett’s culture and history, and the care and maintenance of the museum’s collections.

The Society is supported through the generosity of individuals, families, foundations and businesses who wish to help us *Preserve the Past for the Benefit of the Future*. In addition to being a member, please consider other ways you can support our efforts:

Memorial Gifts or Contributions in Honor: Mark an anniversary, a passing, or honor a loved one with a donation to the Historical Society

Bequests: Naming the Mattapoissett Historical Society as a beneficiary in your will will leave an enduring legacy for the future.

Corporate Matching Gift Programs: Please check with your employer to see if they offer a matching gift program.

Business Sponsorships: We offer many ways for local businesses to sponsor the Historical Society and its efforts.

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 Rogers Gallery
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 Town Wharf General Store

Its Membership Renewal Time!

It’s that time of year again – you should have already received your membership renewal in the mail. Memberships are an essential part of our annual income, and the proceeds are used to cover our operating expenses as well as the development and preservation of our collections and museum. Your support really makes a huge difference, and we can’t thank you enough! We have also added a new membership category this year. If you feel you can give more than the basic cost of membership, please consider becoming a ‘Sustainer’.

Summer Fun by Lisa Hill

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boating
 biking
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 swimming
 triathlon
 concerts
 dances
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 running
 harbor days
 clambake
 memorial day
 labor day
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 relaxing





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- Business Membership \$250

Sign up with our NEW online membership application form or download a membership form by [clicking here](#) and mail to:

Mattapoissett Historical Society
 Post Office Box 535
 Mattapoissett, MA 02739

Odd Objects

Answer: A 19th-century powder measure, used to measure the correct amount of gunpowder for a muzzle-loading firearm. This one measures 2½ 'drums' or about 5/16 oz.

Members of the Mattapoissett Historical Society and Museum are entitled to:

- Free admission to the Mattapoissett Historical Society museum
- Free admission to lectures and programs
- The historical society's newsletter *The Crow's Nest* mailed to your home
- A discount on items from the museum gift store
- Voting privileges at the Mattapoissett Historical Society's Annual Meeting
- The opportunity to *Preserve the Past for the Benefit of the Future*

Business Memberships also include:

- Inclusion on our List of Sponsors which is prominently displayed within the museum, printed in each issue of the newsletter and listed on our website
- Five free adult admissions to the Mattapoissett Historical Society Museum
- A certificate of appreciation in recognition of your support