

The View from
The Crow's Nest



Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Historical Society

Fall 2012 / Issue XVIII

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

Mattapoisett Water Works

By Seth Mendell

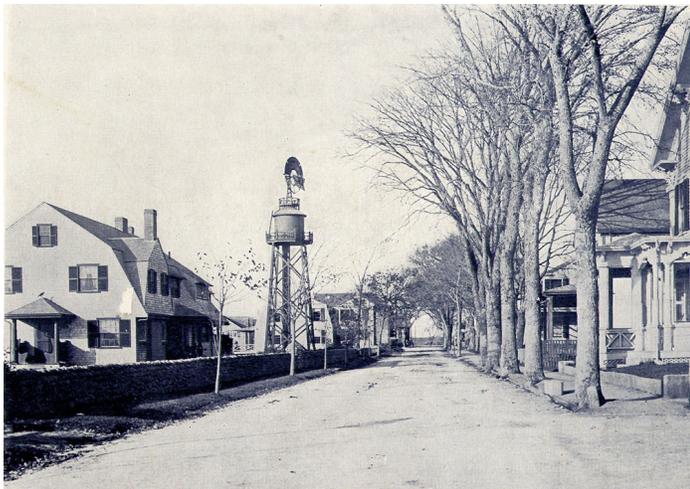
For a century the Mattapoisett water tower stood atop the hill at the intersection of North and Park Streets. Built in 1913, it brought running water into the homes of town residents. Due to its location the tower could be seen from far out into the bay and served as a beacon for mariners before today's navigational aids. Prior to its construction each home had a well and a hand pump, usually in the kitchen. Some of the "summer folk" with houses built after 1850 had a windmill with an elevated tank to give them running water using wind power to pump water from the well into the tank.

Prior to the building of the water tower, the Town of Mattapoisett, acting through its Board of Water Commissioners, contracted with the Hanscom Construction Company to drive eight wells 20 feet deep in the vicinity of the Mattapoisett River to see if there was sufficient water to support a town water system. Following the driving of the wells, the State

Board of Health ordered the continuous pumping for seven days and nights. After only six days it was concluded that the supply of water was far greater than the Town of Mattapoisett could ever use. The daily flow was 500,000 gallons and the state only required half that amount.

With the supply of water confirmed the town entered into a contract for the construction of a water system for the sum of \$62,000. The agreement was signed on December 12, 1912 and bonds were prepared to pay for the project. The contract included the erection of a standpipe (water tower) 90 feet high and 25 feet in diameter, the construction of a pumping station 18 feet by 38 feet with a 10 foot ceiling, two installed 25 H.P. gasoline engines and pumps each capable of pumping 250 gallons of water a minute from the wells to the top of the standpipe, seven miles of cast iron pipe laid in a 5 feet trench system throughout the town and lastly, the installation of 55 hydrants at spots designated by the Water Commissioners.

The water system was up and running in June of 1913 with 165 homes connected up (running water at the tap). The water tower was not yet complete due to a strike at the steel mill, but continuous pumping kept up pressure at the lower level. Also, a heating system needed to be installed in the pumping station and more wells driven along the river. For the year 1914, the Water Department showed a profit of \$1,336. The Town Report of 1915 states that town water had been extended to Pico, the Cedars, Crescent Beach and Point Connet with a total of 77 fire hydrants in the town. The State Board of Health reported that Mattapoisett water was the best in the state.



Hinsdale home on Water Street with elevated water tank circa 1901

(continued on next page)



Mattapoisett Water Works (continued from cover)

Having running water at the kitchen sink and in the bathroom (an addition) created a new problem. A well and hand pump in the kitchen produced a limited amount of water easily taken care of with a pipe to the backyard and bodily waste was taken care of at the outhouse. Beside the bench where you sat was a bucket or box of wood ash from the fireplace or stove with a small shovel. When you were finished you put a shovel full of ash down the hole. The lye in the ash took care of the odor and helped with the decomposition. Now with an abundance of water and flush toilets it was necessary to have a cesspool, a hole in the ground covered by planks to receive the wastewater from the kitchen and bathroom.

With an increasing amount of waste water running into the ground up and down the streets of the town, it became evident that a sewer system was needed. The first sewer line for bodily waste was privately funded in 1914 and ran down North Street from Route 6 to the harbor. There were other sewers, built as early as 1876, but they were storm drains not for wastewater. North, Mechanic, Barstow and Church Streets had storm drains all tied into what was called the Barstow Street Sewer Line which emptied into the harbor near the bathing beach. It does not take much of a stretch of imagination to realize that property owners on these streets would be quick to tie their wastewater into these existing lines. It would be half a century and more before Mattapoisett would deal with the problem of raw sewage brought about by a town water system built in 1913.

Along with running water, the early decades of the 20th century brought many changes to the lives of the people of Mattapoisett. During this period electricity brought the light bulb into homes and

the telephone soon followed. In 1906 the electric rail (trolley) tied the town to New Bedford and surrounding communities. Summer colonies began to develop along Mattapoisett beaches, swelling the summer population of the town. Automobiles appeared on the streets and in an eight-year span the Town Hall, Center School and the Library were all built. In 1914 the opening of the Cape Cod Canal put a major commercial artery on the town's doorstep. The First World War opened the door to further catastrophic events during the 20th century. The Mattapoisett water tower stood as a silent sentinel for 100 years reminding us of that bygone era. Its demolition gives us cause to reflect—"The old order changes to make way for the new."

Anecdotal footnote

Sometime in the mid 1930's the gasoline engines running the pumps in the pumping station were replaced with electric motors. This was a common practice at the time and worked well until the power went off. This was the case in the hurricane of 1938. The many houses and cottages along Mattapoisett's beaches were swept off their foundations breaking the water pipes off allowing the water to spray in fountains up and down the beaches.

The water in the standpipe was reduced to a low level dropping the pressure throughout the town. This was of great concern to the Fire Department and to my uncle Clifford Tripp who was Water Superintendent. His concern with little or no water pressure was that salt and contaminated water would get into the broken pipes contaminating the whole system. He took a Buick automobile, jacked up the rear axel and with a belt from one of the wheels to the water pump in the pumping station kept enough water in the standpipe to give the fire hydrants pressure and time to those men up and down the beaches to turn off the water. I can hear him now, "There by God, that will do it!"



Demolition of the Mattapoisett Water Tower

Photographs by Art Hutchison



Mattapoisett Historical Society

2012 Annual Meeting

The 2012 Annual Meeting was held on Sunday, September 23. The meeting opened with a reading of the 2011 Meeting Minutes by Jennifer McIntire. Maureen McCarthy then gave the Treasurer's report letting the membership know that we are financially stable and able to pay our bills. This was followed by the proposed slate of nominations for the Board of Directors. Chris Demakis was voted in as a new Member at Large. Seth Mendell, Katherine Gaudet, Jennifer McIntire and Maureen McCarthy were all re-elected for their positions as President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Elizabeth Hutchison followed with the Curator's Report, informing members that the Museum had over 660 people attend either programs, events or visit the Museum just since January 2012. Seth Mendell ended the meeting with the President's Report, commenting on recent gifts to the Museum such as the blubber pot donated by Anne Shepley, the Wanderer Mast we will be receiving from the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and the donation of Presto Press newspapers that the Historical Society is working in conjunction with the Library to have digitized.

The Business Meeting was adjourned, and the members were treated to a visit from Ruth and Abby: the 1850s Ladies. Played by Lucy Bly and Judy Roderiques, the Ladies spent over a half hour chatting with the members about their lives as women living in New Bedford during the 1850s-early 1860s. The ladies provided details about everyday life for women whose husbands were at sea, which included tidbits about how they pooled resources to help manage finances and their children, and what women did to help themselves in a time when they might not see their husbands for several year. Abby and Ruth also spoke about the people from around the world that would visit their homes when their sons brought home friends from distant ports of call. It was certainly an entertaining and informative experience for all.

Lucy Bly and Judy Roderiques as the 1850s Ladies entertaining members at the Annual Meeting
Photograph by Jennifer McIntire

Curators Corner

By Elizabeth Hutchison

As this issue of the *Crow's Nest* is being read, I am knee deep in Third Graders from Center School! Many have never been to our Museum before, and our goal is to offer them programs and exhibits to make them want to return! This year we are focusing on meeting the needs of the teachers, students and schools by helping them meet the Massachusetts Frameworks for History and Social Science. To this end, the Third Graders are being taught about the significance of historic artifacts and sites, specifically how they tell about life in the past and help us to see how life has changed. We are doing this by offering a more hands on approach to their visit, allowing for examination of certain artifacts and thinking about what has changed. All of this will be doused with a brief history of the town, and will have them thinking about what Mattapoisett used to be like, and how that has shaped the town's today.

While I love working with the children, we are also knee deep in other projects too. We are excited to be **opening the Museum for the Holiday Season** (please see the full page schedule included in this *Crow's Nest*.) Not only will we be open for shopping where you can purchase beautiful Mattapoisett gifts for your Holiday needs, but we will be featuring a fun toy train exhibit along with some information and artifacts telling about the Fairhaven Branch Railroad Line that once carried travelers to Mattapoisett. We are also hosting a full schedule of Holiday programs for children and for adults. We hope that you will come join us.

(continued on next page)





Curators Corner (continued from page 3)

We would also like to introduce our new **Year Round Volunteer Program**. We would like to establish a pool of volunteers for the many needs of the Museum. We are looking for people who are interested in volunteering for specific areas and projects. Some areas in need of Volunteers are Programs (both public and school groups), Acquisitions Registration, Public Relations, the Museum Shop, Exhibits, Office Administration, Research and Museum and Artifact Maintenance, among many others. The intent of the program is to allow a Volunteer to concentrate specifically on their own area of interest, give them guidelines and responsibilities, and to allow members to become more involved with the museum. If you have a specific interest, we have a project for you! For more information, or to volunteer, please feel free to contact me at the museum at (508) 758-2844.

Thank you to an anonymous donor who gifted the Museum the Book *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved* by Frank M. Stuart. It is a beautiful book that displays the New Bedford Whaling Museum’s superb scrimshaw collection, giving information about the artists, specific pieces of work, and the history of whaling and the art of scrimshaw.

A Seminar in Russian History

Russia Under the Tsars---Seth Mendell
“Transition to Reality Check”---Rachel Deery

The Mattapoissett Free Public Library in partnership with the Mattapoissett Historical Society will present a five part lecture series on the history of Russia under the Tsars. Seth Mendell, President of the Historical Society and who taught Russian history at the Avon Old farms School in Connecticut, will trace the development of Russia from the grand princes of Kiev in the ninth century to the fall of the Romanovs in 1917.

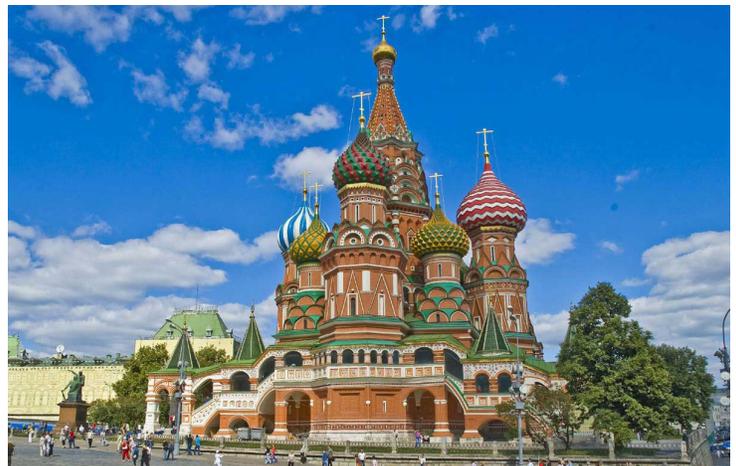
- Lecture I* - Kiev, Moscow and the House of Ivan
- Lecture II* - Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great
- Lecture III* - Empress Elizabeth and Katherine the Great
- Lecture IV* - Alexander I, Napoleon, Nicholas I
- Lecture V* - Alexander II, Nicholas II and Revolution, 1917

The lectures will be held in the meeting room of the MFPL Library on consecutive Saturday afternoons from 2:00 to 3:30 PM starting on January 12th and concluding on February 9th. Those wishing to attend the seminar (5 lectures) are encouraged to sign up as there will be handouts. Please contact Susan Pizzolato at 508-758-4171 or spizzolo@sailsinc.org. However, the seminar is open to anyone who may wish to attend one or more of the five lectures.

On February 16, the historical seminar will conclude with a human interest presentation By Rachel Deery, “Transition to Reality Check: American witness to change and adjustment in Post-Soviet Russia.”

Rachel, who holds a law degree from the University of Virginia and currently sits on the Board of the Mattapoissett Library, will speak about her experiences as an expatriate and journalist in Moscow during two different time periods in Post-Soviet history. “Transition” stories will cover her life as a newlywed during the early 1990s in the period framed by two coups and characterized by the headlong rush to free markets and freedom of speech. In the “Reality Check” stories, she will discuss her return to Moscow in late 1998 with two young children after the economic collapse of the newly capitalist country.

Rachel will share her substantial collection of Soviet materials, souvenirs and photographs from the time periods she spent in Russia, as well as cultural items: art, jewelry, crafts which span generations of Russian history and which still reflect the enduring culture today.

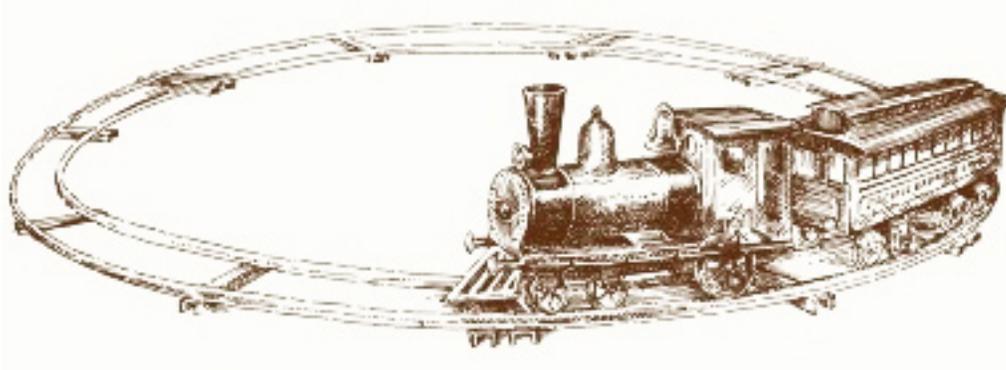


St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, Russia





**Mattapoisett Museum and Carriage House will be
Open for the Holidays!**



Featuring
 A Charming and Nostalgic Toy Train Exhibit
 Unique Mattapoisett Gifts
 Activities for the Whole Family!

Special Programs:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Saturday, November 24 | Museum Opens for the Season!
Join us to see the new Toy Train exhibit. Light Refreshments. |
| Saturday, December 1 | Christmas Caroling, 3:00 - 4:00 pm, meet at the Library |
| Saturday, December 8 | Drop-In Christmas Craft |
| Saturday, December 15 | Homemade Christmas Class - Come make gifts to bring home! |
| Thursday, December 20 | Museum Closes for the Season at 12:00 pm |

Shop

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * New Stationary featuring yesteryear
Mattapoisett Snow Scenes * New beautiful poster "Harbors and Inlets of
Buzzards Bay" from Clifford Ashley's mural * Other artwork and maps depicting Mattapoisett | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Coffee Table Books and different publications
featuring Mattapoisett * Book marks, cup plates, children's rope
bracelets, and MUCH MORE |
|---|--|

Hours and Location:

November 24 through December 20, Monday though Thursday and Saturday, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
 5 Church Street, Mattapoisett (508) 758-2844
mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net



SUPPORT YOUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Mattapoisett Historical 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 Mattapoisett 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.

Thank you to the following Businesses for their support:

Brownell Systems, Inc.

DG Service Company, Inc.

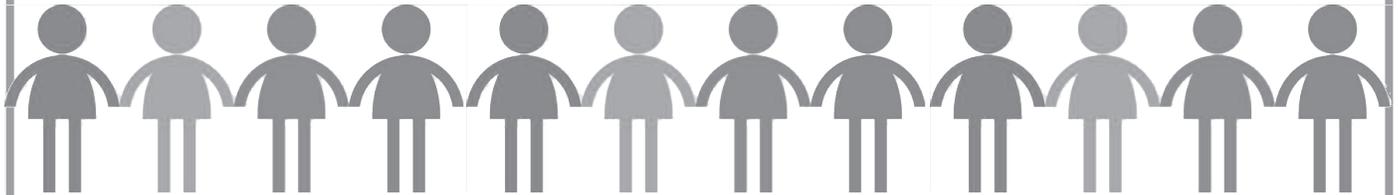
Fisher & Rocha, Inc.

Mr. Andrew McIntire

Reynolds DeWalt Printing

Rogers Gallery

W Wood Painting



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:

- ◆ Programs (both public and school groups)
- ◆ Acquisitions Registration
- ◆ Public Relations
- ◆ Museum Shop
- ◆ Exhibits
- ◆ Office Administration
- ◆ Research
- ◆ Museum and Artifact Maintenance

If you have a particular interest, we have a need! We look forward to hearing from you!

Please call or e-mail Elizabeth Hutchison with any questions.

(508) 758-2844 mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net



Members of the Bay Club at Mattapoissett recently visited the museum. After a reception in the Carriage House, Seth chronicled the history of the Clifford Ashley mural.

Photograph by Mary Beth Morse

WORD SEARCH *By Lisa Hill*

Fish of Buzzards Bay

E	R	C	S	F	O	B	S	K	F	L	A	S	E	R
B	L	U	E	S	H	A	R	K	I	N	L	S	F	L
O	H	S	I	F	K	A	E	W	U	T	B	A	O	S
N	S	K	E	E	H	K	D	T	B	S	L	B	C	M
I	N	E	A	S	H	A	N	D	P	S	U	D	D	T
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M	A	C	K	E	R	E	L	F	L	O	I	I	L	H
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Y	E	L	L	O	W	F	I	N	T	U	N	A	S	N
K	B	A	P	K	U	E	W	A	O	C	Y	S	U	S

- black sea bass
- bluefish
- fluke
- scup
- striped bass
- tautog
- winter flounder
- yellowfin tuna
- cod
- haddock
- sea bass
- bluefin tuna
- blue shark
- weakfish
- bonito
- mackerel
- false albacore
- cusck
- pollock
- smelt
- mako shark

Mattapoissett Historical Society

<i>President</i>	Seth Mendell	<i>Members at Large</i>	Nate Bekemeier	<i>Curator</i>	Elizabeth Hutchison
<i>Vice President</i>	Katherine Gaudet		Jim Broadwater		
<i>Secretary</i>	Jennifer McIntire		Tom Copps	<i>Crow's Nest Editor</i>	Mary Beth Morse
<i>Treasurer</i>	Maureen McCarthy		Chris Demakis		
			Lisa Hill		



MATTAPOISETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



Fall Festival Fun Saturday, October 13!

Photographs by Jennifer McIntire

Become a member today!

- Individual \$20.00 Family \$30.00
- Life - Individual \$150.00 Life - Family \$200.00
- Special Gift - \$ _____

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