

The View from The Crow's Nest



THE BARK "WANDERER"

Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Historical Society

Issue V

Fall 2007

Mattapoisett's Sesquicentennial Celebration

by Seth Mendell

The week long Sesquicentennial 150th Anniversary Celebration from August 4th through 12th was a resounding success and showed the results of many months of planning and organization. Starting with the largest and grandest parade Mattapoisett has seen in many years and ending with a monster waterfront bonfire followed by a sensational flag ceremony on Sunday afternoon, the week had something for everyone. There were historic talks and walks, dances and ice cream, kites and games, picnics and teas, concerts and art shows, harbor tours and trolley tours, sailboat regattas and whale boat races, and a colonial encampment and re-enactment performed at the Herring Weir by the Fairhaven Militia. The Ecumenical Vespers Service at Ned's Point at sunset the first Sunday evening was beautiful and at the Wampanoag Heritage program the evening before at Camp Massasoit many town residents learned about



Photograph by Tim Smith

Ecumenical Vespers Service at Ned's Point

the Native Americans who lived in the area before the English came.

Planning for the week long celebration started early in 2006 when the Mattapoisett Historical Commission invited some thirty organizations and groups in town to attend a "brainstorming" session. After several such meetings, a 150th Anniversary Celebration Committee was formed co-chaired by Jordan Collyer and Margaret DeMello. A schematic was developed dividing each of the eight days into three parts (morning, afternoon and evening) and the different organizations were asked to host an

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Mattapoisett's 150th Parade



Photograph by Jennifer McIntire

Colonial Encampment



Photograph by Tim Smith

BonFire on the Beach



Photograph by Tim Smith

event in a particular time slot. As time went by enthusiasm and excitement grew and by early this past spring the calendar of events was filled and nearly every organization or group in town was involved.

The first event of the Sesquicentennial year was the Town's Birthday Party on Sunday, May 20th hosted by the Historical Commission. The event was very well attended and set the tone for the week long celebration to come. When August 4th arrived the Town turned out en mass to witness the parade - and continued to do so throughout the week. Many people worked long and hard to make the event a success - but it was the residents of Mattapoissett who gathered together to celebrate the Town's 150th Anniversary that really made the event a *great* success!

Mattapoissett's 150th Parade



Photographs by Jennifer McIntire

Cultural Costume Parade



Photograph by Jennifer McIntire

Down To The Sea In Ships Film

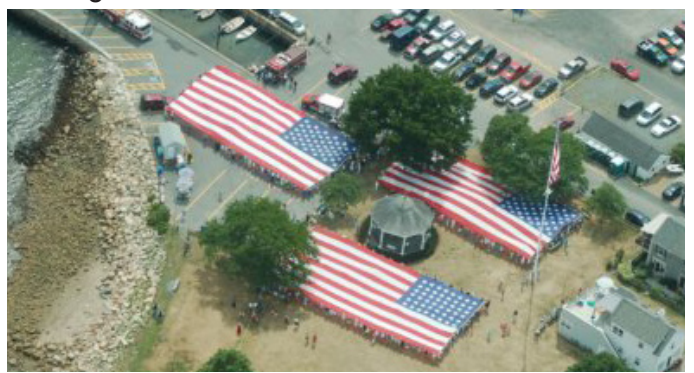


Photograph by Tim Smith

Cushing Cemetery Walk



Closing Ceremonies



Photographs by Tim Smith

Thar She Blows! Children's Programs Continue

by Katherine Gaudet

On October 20, from 2:00 to 3:30, at the museum, children will be treated to an afternoon of sea songs. Friends Academy music educators and professional musicians, Vi Taylor and Jim Bean, will bring songs of the sea to Mattapoisett's children. This interactive program will weave in a variety of instruments from all over the world, instruments that sailors themselves would have used. Children will have an opportunity to play them as they accompany the sea chanteys.

Everyone will embark with the song *The Bark Gay Head*, which was a whaler, built in Mattapoisett. They will visit New Bedford, round Cape Horn and go to the Sandwich Islands, learning songs from each place. Each child will receive a booklet of songs to take home. Please pre-register for this wonderful event!



An Old-Fashioned Christmas

On Sunday, December 9, from 2:00-3:30, the Mattapoisett Museum will open its doors to share the wonders of Christmases Past with children. Before decorations could be bought at local stores, they were often crafted from materials at hand or from nature. Children will have the opportunity to recreate these traditional decorations to take home for their own trees. Stringing popcorn and cranberries, creating fortune cookie decorations from walnuts, crafting tinfoil chains and making cornucopias are just a few of the crafts children will enjoy. Katherine Gaudet and Tom Tucker, who will teach the crafts, will also tell a few stories of Christmases long ago.

The crafts are geared to children from the ages of 7 to 12, and space is limited. Please call Bette Roberts at 508-758-2844 to reserve a spot for your child. And, Merry Christmas!

Years Ago by Charles Mendell

The War of 1812 and The Seaweed Fort

One hundred and fifty years ago (now 195 years ago) the people of Mattapoisett went through days and nights of terror such as had never been experienced in the village before and certainly have never been since. The second war with England was in full swing all during 1814 and the enemy warships were bombarding and attacking towns around the Bay with frightening success.

The little village of 40 houses with its many shipyards and its salt-works and its many ships—some of them of 400 tons or more for the European and Russian trade—made a tempting target along with New Bedford, “the privateers’ nest”, and Wareham and Falmouth with their yards and merchant vessels and privateers.

For the first year and a half of the war, the British blockading squadrons seemed to have left Buzzards Bay alone. For this reason, the citizens of Mattapoisett and surrounding communities seemed to have done surprisingly little in the way of fortifying and arming their harbors. The war was far away; there had been a few defeats and victories along the Canadian Border; Washington had been burned, to be sure, but American privateers were taking heavy toll of British shipping; and hadn’t the Constitution sunk the Gueriere?

However, late in 1813 His Britannic Majesty’s Armed Brig Nimrod, carrying sixteen 34 pounders, two long nines, and one 18 pounder sailed into Buzzards Bay and began her campaign of attacking all shipyards and wharves, ships and store houses, salt-works, factories, and rope-walks that she could find.

She first attacked Falmouth, bombarding the village because the inhabitants refused to surrender two field guns and the Nantucket mail packet, which had shipped into harbor to escape capture.

Perhaps it was the shock of this actual attack that

shook the people of Mattapoisett into action, and speedy action at that. There was no time to build forts, bring in cannon, and march in detachments of troops. But a big bluff might work. And so there was built the famous seaweed fort, the great hoax that saved the town until it could be sufficiently armed.

As the Nimrod reconnoitered around the Bay, her captain must have noted with satisfaction how entirely exposed and defenseless at Mattapoisett were the ships lying at wharves and moorings, the half-built hulls in the yards and behind them the storehouses and workshops and salt-works. There was nothing to prevent his longboats, each mounting a three pounder and carrying 30 marines, from landing and burning the vessels and waterfront to ashes. And so one evening he must have gone to bed content that this maneuver could be carried out in a trice.

But the next morning when he leveled his telescope at the village, what could his feelings have been? The shipyards and docks, which but yesterday had lain wide open were now defended by a substantial fortification, mounting heavy cannon, and manned by several detachments of armed troops whose caps and rifles he could see as they marched to and fro above the line of the fort.

What had happened? Well the night before, as soon as it was dark, everybody — men, women, and children — flocked to the waterfront and went to work. They piled up a long high bank of seaweed, stretching the length of the harbor front. Over the top of this, many great logs painted black, with muzzle holes outlined, pointed out to the Bay. And bright and early, all the children in town, paper soldier hats on their heads and sticks over their shoulders, marched back and forth behind the fortification, only their hats and the ends of the sticks showing.

Mattapoisett was strongly defended—and saved for the time being.

Cranberry Memories

by Phyllis Mendell

Near our cottage where we spent the summers was a cranberry bog where we liked to walk along the dikes. Cranberry bogs cover large patches of low ground and are surrounded by ditches and dikes. The ditches hold water and the dikes are built up higher than the land around. If there is not enough rainfall, water is pumped from the pond nearby.

Walking along the dikes was always interesting. Sometimes we surprised a frog or a turtle sleeping in the sun. In the fall when the berries were ripe we liked to see the pickers busy with their scoops. These scoops have long wooden teeth with which to comb the berries from the vines. The vines are all interwoven growing close to the soil.

When we got there at the beginning of summer, the berries were small and green; but in September they were a deep “cranberry red”. If we had an early frost, water was pumped in to flood the ditches and the entire bog, thus protecting the crop. The pump made its own significant sound. Whenever we heard it, we knew that it sounded the end of summer.

CRANBERRY PHOTO HERE

New Additions to Collection

by Eloise Ricciardelli

A donation from Charles Mello of eight early quilts is a welcome gift as well as a reminder of his talented wife, Ann, an artisan whose contemporary quilts were displayed in our 2006 summer exhibition "Skillful Hands: Quilt and Needlework."



Helen Richmond has given us a beautiful wooden Whaling Captain's medicine chest with a design of various woods and ivory on its lid and contains some of the original items. Also included with the gift was a walrus tooth scraper.

A sweet wooden doll's trunk with carved lid is a gift from Nancy Pearson. The trunk has a papered interior and is filled with doll's clothes. The trunk was acquired by Mrs. Pearson at an auction of the contents of the home of Mrs. Huybertie Hamlin, noted resident of Mattapoisett in the 1900's. Having known and admired Mrs. Hamlin, Nancy asked her mother to bid on it at the auction. The gift has arrived at an appropriate time as our 2007 special exhibit will focus on children.





Photo by Sylvia Fales

Volunteers Carol Atkinson and Ruth Cederberg man the Society's booth at Harbor Days in August.

MATTAPOISETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Eloise Ricciardell

Tom Tucker

CURATOR

Bette Roberts

Curator's Corner

by Bette Roberts

Many thanks to the crew who manned the booth at Harbor Days. Your willingness to volunteer is greatly appreciated by many people.

A reminder to those of you who received letters regarding membership dues - if you haven't returned yours yet, we would appreciate your doing so soon. Apologies to those of you who received a letter but are Life members. Mea Culpa!

Don't forget about the fall programs at the museum - Sunday October 14th at 2:00pm - Sarah Parks from the Whaling Museum will

be here to share her research on "Famous Figureheads and the Vessels They Graced".

The Sesquicentennial was a tremendous celebration - I know we can't top it, but 2008 marks the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Mattapoissett Historical Society. Any celebration ideas we might consider?





MATTAPoisETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Mattapoissett Lithograph by Larry Van Alstynne
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Mattapoissett Historical Museum
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In honor of Mattapoissett's 150th Birthday enjoy a
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