

# *The View from* The Crow's Nest



*Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Historical Society*

*Winter 2015 / Issue XXIV*

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

## **Shipyard Park** *by Elizabeth Hutchison*

The story of Shipyard Park began with the County House Hotel fire of 1855. The County House Hotel, owned by Leonard Hammond, was located on the water side of Water Street at the east edge of the current Shipyard Park and across from the Bay View Hotel. The fire was discovered at 2:00 am on February 7, 1855, a night residents remembered as bitterly cold. The New Bedford Standard Times reported "The people gathered immediately, but owing to the intensity of the cold and the rapid spread of the conflagration, their efforts were unavailing." The fire spread west, burning Eaton Hall (a two story building with a hall for meetings above and stores below), the store building next to Eaton Hall, the sheds and stables of the hotel and even R.L. Barstow's two story boatbuilding shop and the Holmes shipyard moulding loft, both located to the rear of the County House Hotel. It was not until Jonathan H. Holmes' house was deliberately blown up that the fire was contained and stopped.

Following this devastating fire, Mr. George Purrington Jr. purchased the Eaton Hall lot and quickly got to work erecting Purrington Hall, finishing it in the spring of 1857. The building had two stories with a hall

occupying the second floor and three shops located on the first floor. Mr. Purrington worked quickly to finish his project because Mattapoisett was about to separate from Rochester and a meeting hall was needed to conduct the new town meetings. On Saturday, June 20, 1857, the first meeting of the Town of Mattapoisett was held upstairs in Purrington Hall. Officers, among whom were Amittai B. Hammond, Joseph E. Smith, Jarvis Ellis, Samuel Sturtevant, Thomas Nelson, Josiah Holmes, Weston Howland and William E. Sparrow, were elected to conduct town affairs.

Fast forwarding 43 years to the year 1900, Mattapoisett became the summer home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hamlin. The members of the Hamlin family had been summer residents of Marion, but Charles and Huybertie chose to purchase the Shattuck



**Shipyard Park early 20th century.**

(continued on next page)



**Shipyard Park** (continued from cover)

place at the end of Ned’s Point adjacent to the lighthouse for their summer home. As Edward Wood writes in his book *Old Mattapoissett A Summer Portrait* “Unlike many others, the Hamlins did not settle in Mattapoissett simply to relax and hide away in the summer. They soon came to regard their Mattapoissett house as their home, its seasonal limitations imposed only by Hamlin’s career.”

Bertie Hamlin lived in Mattapoissett for at least part of every year for 65 years, long after Charles died in 1938. Mrs. Hamlin became quite involved in town affairs and causes. She was a founding member



**Huybertie Lansing Pruyn Hamlin**

of the Mattapoissett Improvement Association which began in 1904 with the goal of civic improvement. “The association’s efforts for the town were so worthwhile that it eventually paid itself the ultimate tribute: It put itself out of business, the town having assumed responsibility for many of the functions and improvements it had nurtured.” Bertie’s involvement in the Mattapoissett Improvement Association demonstrated her love of and dedication to improving the town of Mattapoissett. She eventually recorded her life in Mattapoissett in what she called the “Mattapoissett Chronicles,” 200 typed pages of anecdotes of town history and gossip. The “Chronicles,” along with other papers left by Bertie Hamlin, are a treasure trove of town information from the first half of the 20th century and help tell the story of Shipyard Park.

Bertie Hamlin was friends with Mrs. Mary “Minnie” Winchester Barnard Curtis, a resident of Mattapoissett and Boston since 1871. Minnie Barnard Curtis was a grand dame of Mattapoissett, having inherited from her grandparents the Barnard Estate at Cannonville which consisted of 11 “cottages” located on Beacon, Ship, and Foster Streets, Ned’s Point Road and Shipyard Lane. Minnie also owned the Cannonville Beach property and Barnard’s Wharf which she made available to friends, neighbors, and tenants of her

cottages. In 1906 Minnie Barnard (she had not yet married Francis G. Curtis) also took up a prominent position in the social world of Mattapoissett residents becoming Treasurer of the Casino (an establishment created in 1888 for the entertainment of the “Summer People” of Mattapoissett). For the next 50 years, she was the one who approved programs or policies. If something did not meet with Minnie Curtis’ approval, it was not adopted.

While Minnie Barnard Curtis was a very formal person who insisted upon correct social behavior, she was known in town as a generous woman dedicated to providing a pleasant time for everyone and considered to be always friendly and cordial. Minnie Barnard Curtis was also civic minded, looking to improve Mattapoissett for the good of the town’s people. And here is where our seemingly separate stories converge.

Within Bertie Hamlin’s papers, copies of which are housed in the Francis Rowland Research Room at the Mattapoissett Historical Society, is the story of Shipyard Park which really did begin with the County House Hotel fire in 1855. As Bertie Hamlin wrote, it was late summer 1917 when Mrs. Minnie Curtis and Mrs. Bertie Hamlin happened to meet on Water Street where they discussed “the rumor that the water front property with the stone wharf was to be bought from the Estate of the late Judge Lemuel LeBaron Holmes and to be used for coal pockets.” Both women felt that this area would be better used as an attractive park for the town’s people and an asset for visitors landing from yachts.

It was hard for the ladies to envision a park as the site itself was discouraging. The place was used as a dump and the “yards and land back of the shops made a sorry sight...It was war time, but [their] talk that afternoon decided [them] to call a meeting at Mrs. Curtis’ house the next week at 8:30 in the evening.” It was at this first meeting that Mrs. Minnie Barnard Curtis became the chairman of a committee consisting of Miss Stackpole, Mr. Hinsdale, Mr. Charles Mendell, Mr. Lewis Bolles and Mr. Lemuel LeBaron Dexter as Treasurer. This was fitting as Mrs. Minnie Barnard Curtis had conceived the idea with Mrs. Bertie Hamlin, started action, held all the meetings at her house and each year personally solicited money to maintain the park.



## Shipyard Park (continued)

The committee's goal was to raise money to save the Holmes' property from future coal yards. The Holmes yard "consisted of a strip running down from Water Street...and on it a wooden building had been built to house the little Post Office after it moved out of the present Village Shop. On the lot back of Romeo's store was a picturesque old shingled building once the Ship Yard Shop rather out of repair - back of this the land ran to the water and included the short stone wharf. It was owned by Mrs. Thomas Washington of Washington, D.C. - the adopted daughter of Judge Holmes of Main Street." The committee purchased these properties and was also gifted by the Town the land that was once Leonard Hammond's shipyard. It was Mrs. James Hammond who suggested the name Shipyard Park.

For the next 20 years, about \$2,500.00 was raised to be spent on filling, grass cutting, park benches and a fence with a gate built between the park and the Town Wharf. "The filling was discouraging as the old Shipyards had accumulated great piles of wood chips from their years of sawing and cutting and this became a spongy bottom and all the dumping seemed to sink as fast as it was put in. Mr. Charles Mendell was indefatigable in watching the filling and in managing to secure the excavations from any new building and having them brought in as gifts to the park."

In 1919, Mrs. Charles Mendell, whose full name was Florence Purrington Mendell, approached Bertie Hamlin offering to donate the property the Purrington House stood on to Shipyard Park - recall the Purrington House was built on property purchased as a result of the County House Hotel fire of 1855. "They would pull it down and use the material if [the committee] would fill the foundation." This meant the park would no longer be hidden behind buildings but would have a wide frontage on Water Street.

The park was immediately popular with a bandstand erected. Concerts, fairs and pageants were held there as favored features of Mattapoisett summers. The Mattapoisett Improvement Association donated annually to the parks upkeep along with other interested members in town. The Improvement Association also helped secure the mizzen mast of the *Wanderer* for the park's flagpole in the summer of 1925. After all, the *Wanderer* had been built in Shipyard Park in the Holmes shipyard.

After the death of Mr. Lewis Bolles, a member of the committee to create the park, the park expanded with the purchase of the Thomas Luce property using half of the \$30,000 that Mr. Bolles had bequeathed the Park. The other \$15,000 was to be used for maintenance of the park. With this, the committee dissolved having "cared for the property for almost thirty years and the town took charge of what had never cost the taxpayers one cent...[I]t was what [the committee] had hoped in 1918 - a great asset to the town."

And that is the story of how a fire in 1855 and two grand dames of Mattapoisett became the impetus for the creation of Shipyard Park - a town treasure enjoyed by all.

## Hats and Fashion Accessories - Oh My!

Last summer the Mattapoisett Historical Society was fortunate to have dedicated volunteers help us examine over half of our clothing collection checking each piece's condition and cataloging appropriately. This summer we will be tackling fashion accessories including hats, jewelry, fans and parasols. Each item will be assessed for condition, matched with a catalog number, marked, photographed and re-housed in appropriate archival boxes. All of this information will then be entered into our museum database as we continue with our goal of having all of our collections cataloged and easily searchable.

Once again, we are challenging ourselves to make it through these collections by the end of the summer, so if you would like to donate some time to this project, we would love to have you (teenagers welcome). Please feel free to call 508-758-2844 or e-mail [mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net](mailto:mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net) with any questions or to sign up to volunteer.



Carved ivory fan with silver belonging to Mary Meigs



## From the Curator's Desk

by Elizabeth Hutchison

The end of 2014 was a busy time here at the museum. Our Arts and Crafts Holiday Fair, which took place the first weekend in December, was a success. Area artists and crafters shared their original creations and much shopping was done. We continued to open our doors on the Saturdays before Christmas sharing a wonderfully nostalgic exhibit *Beloved Books: Bygone Children's Treasures* which was enjoyed by all. Thank you again to fellow bibliophiles Lynn Haugen, Katherine Gaudet, Lisa Hill and Jenn McIntire who lent us their own treasures to include in the exhibit.

In November we also welcomed Lenora Robinson to the museum as a part-time archivist. Lenora comes to us with a Masters in Library Science and experience in archiving and special collections, as well as hands on experience in local historical societies and library reference. Lenora has been working with us since November helping to catalog and archive our maps, blue prints and schematics collections. On the next page is a short article Lenora wrote detailing the project she is tackling -- an informative read for all interested.

The Mattapoisett Historical Society is quickly filling in its spring and summer calendar with programs and events for the community to enjoy. March 11 will bring us a Quiz Night at the Inn and May 3 will bring the annual New Bedford Sea Chantey Chorus concert at 2:00 pm. Please be sure to keep up with our Calendar of Events and the goings on at the museum through our Facebook page or through our website at [www.mattapoisetthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.mattapoisetthistoricalsociety.org).

### Recent Acquisitions:

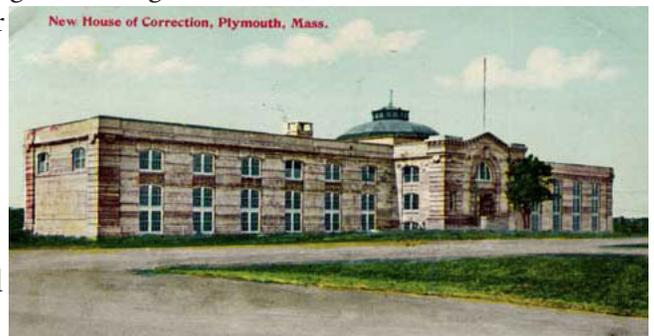
- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| 2015.1 | George F. Purrington's <i>The Franklin Sixth Reader and Speaker</i> 1879 |
| 2015.2 | Two sheer white cotton and lace shirtwaist blouses                       |

## Sunday Lecture: Plymouth County Corrections, Then and Now

by Jennifer N. McIntire

What constitutes a crime and how should the guilty person be punished? Society's views and actual laws have changed over the years. Deputy Liisa Budge-Johnson, Outreach Coordinator for the Plymouth County Sheriff's Department, regaled her audience at the museum with a colorful account of the history of wrongdoings and jailing in Plymouth County. Sharing factual stories and entertaining jokes, Liisa brought us through the history of crime and punishment from 1620 to the present day.

Liisa's fascinating PowerPoint presentation was enlivened and substantiated by solid research and interesting facts. Who knew that the first capital punishment within the colony occurred in 1630, only a decade after the Pilgrims landed, for the crime of murder committed by John Billington against a neighbor? We learned that in 1870 the sheriff, deputies or constables of Wareham were called to deliver a woman to the keeper of the jail in Plymouth with her small child. No one is quite sure why the child was included. And, while most who have taken a class in American history will remember the names of Sacco and Vanzetti, how many knew that Vanzetti spent time in the Plymouth county jail? Liisa's presentation definitely enlightened her audience as to the history of corrections in Plymouth County. All present enjoyed the content as well as the knowledgeable, vivacious speaker.



Obery Street County Farm Prison, ca. 1911

## Community Preservation Project

by Lenora Robinson

*MAP, noun*

: a picture or chart usually on a flat surface that shows the rivers, mountains, streets, etc., in a particular area

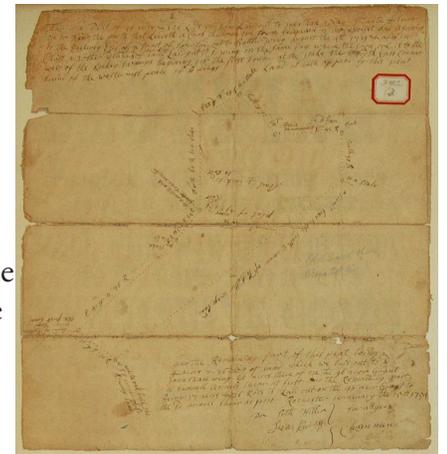
: a picture or chart that shows the different parts of something

I began at the Mattapoisett Historical Society Museum and Carriage House in November with the task of locating, organizing, cataloging and housing the “maps” in the collections. What I have found in my efforts is that they are everywhere! We keep finding maps and other documents rolled up and tucked away in boxes, corners and cabinets. We have also discovered that they are not all “maps.” There has been an interesting assortment of blueprints, house and boat schematics and town surveys in addition to traditional street maps.

The project began with unrolling what maps were immediately known about and easily located. A great variety of these documents came from a large cardboard box perched on top of the book shelves. There was also a large bound book of mid-19th century plot plans tucked into a shelving unit. This book is filled with about 350 survey maps of the town and surrounding areas.

The survey book has now been cross-referenced with existing catalog records, entered into the PastPerfect cataloging application (which will allow us to search using certain criteria such as a family name), photographed and relocated to the top of the new flat file system that was purchased with the Community Preservation grant. The majority of the other maps have begun the flattening process and are sorted, photographed and ready to be cataloged. The current inventory documentation and card catalogs are being researched for existing donation information to fill out the digital cataloging system.

All in all, it has been an interesting start of a project.



Page from our Assessor's Survey Book-land laid out to Jonathan Wing

## 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)
- ◆ Exhibits
- ◆ Acquisitions Registration
- ◆ Office Administration
- ◆ Public Relations
- ◆ Research
- ◆ Museum Shop
- ◆ Museum and Artifact Maintenance

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

Please call Elizabeth Hutchison at (508) 758-2844 or email [mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net](mailto:mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net) with any questions.





## Mattapoissett Historical Society Calendar of Events *Winter/Spring 2015*

- February 26     **Sharing Your Passion: Personal Collections** 6:00 to 8:00 pm. The Mattapoissett Historical Society invites you to share your unique, fanciful and maybe even eclectic collection with fellow Mattapoissett residents at our first Personal Collections Night. Residents are invited to display their beloved collections and share their knowledge with the public for an evening of celebration of the personal collector. Space is limited, so if you are interested, please contact the museum at 508-758-2844 or [mattapoissett.museum@verizon.net](mailto:mattapoissett.museum@verizon.net). A reception will accompany the exhibit. \$5 Suggested Donation.
- March 11        **Quiz Night at the Inn at Shipyard Park** at 7:30 pm. Join us for a fun night of Mattapoissett history themed questions and see how well you know your town. Enjoy food, drinks and laughter as you help the Mattapoissett Historical Society raise funds to support our Programming efforts. Donation is \$10 per team of four.
- May 3            **New Bedford Harbor Sea Chantey Chorus** at 2:00 pm. Our favorite sea chantey singers are back to get our toes tapping to some wonderful maritime music. Come join us for a truly enjoyable program. \$5 Suggested Donation.

## SUPPORT YOUR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Mattapoissett 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 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.

**Thank you to the following Businesses for their support:**

American Research and Management, Co.  
Brownell Systems, Inc.  
DG Service Company

Edward Jones  
G.H. Dunn Insurance  
Mattapoissett Boatyard, Inc.

Roger's Gallery  
Town Wharf General Store



# WORD SEARCH

by Lisa Hill

## *Plymouth County Jail*

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | T | N | O | H | C | T | A | H | D | R | A | H | C | I | R |
| C | N | R | A | H | L | O | C | I | U | N | H | E | T | E | N |
| A | E | R | I | S | H | R | R | E | Z | P | C | T | G | I | G |
| P | B | I | G | E | I | S | B | B | H | R | E | L | G | E | N |
| M | I | C | E | S | I | M | I | F | S | Z | U | I | E | N | S |
| O | S | H | W | R | S | I | R | N | N | B | I | N | G | Y | R |
| C | H | A | R | L | E | S | T | A | Y | L | O | R | T | G | R |
| R | O | R | R | I | I | T | V | E | F | T | A | N | U | B | R |
| E | P | D | E | O | V | H | T | A | G | I | E | N | E | I | R |
| W | L | R | W | O | R | I | O | N | N | M | I | S | M | Y | M |
| O | B | E | R | Y | H | E | I | G | H | T | S | P | H | H | U |
| L | S | I | I | W | M | L | E | S | H | E | R | I | F | F | D |
| F | T | D | A | A | L | R | I | M | E | T | P | A | B | S | D |
| Y | M | R | O | I | Z | N | U | N | I | D | L | R | E | O | S |
| A | D | E | B | P | U | R | T | E | Y | R | E | T | A | N | A |
| M | T | C | D | P | Y | O | R | T | U | I | C | E | D | E | F |

Sheriff  
 Crime  
 Punishment  
 Billington  
 Bishop  
 Besse

Grainger  
 Mayflower Compact  
 Pods  
 Obery Heights  
 Vanzetti  
 Charles Taylor

Dinunzio  
 Whitey Bulger  
 Richard Hatch  
 G Unit  
 Richard Reid  
 Farm

### *Mattapoissett Historical Society*

*President*

Jennifer McIntire

*Vice President*

Katherine Gaudet

*Secretary*

Lisa Hill

*Treasurer*

Kathleen Damaskos

*President Emeritus*

Seth Mendell

*Members at Large*

Jim Broadwater

Erich Carroll

Chris Demakis

Leda Kim

Maureen McCarthy

*Curator*

Elizabeth Hutchison

*Crow's Nest Editor*

Mary Beth Morse



MATTAPOISETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY *Preserving the Past for the Benefit of the Future*  
 5 CHURCH STREET | POST OFFICE BOX 535 | MATTAPOISETT, MA 02739 | (508) 758-2844  
 WWW.MATTAPOISETTHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG | INFO@MATTAPOISETTHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG

Non-profit Org.  
 U.S. Postage Paid  
 Rochester, MA  
 02770  
 Permit No. 107



### ***Beloved Books Exhibit***

Our December nostalgic exhibit *Beloved Books: Bygone Children's Treasures* which was enjoyed by all.

#### ***Become a member today!***

- Annual - Family \$50.00       Life - Family \$1,000.00
- Annual - Individual \$35.00     Life - Individual \$500.00
- Annual - Student/  
Senior (60+)/Military \$20.00       Business \$250.00
- Special Gift - \$\_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to: Mattapoissett Historical Society

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your generous support