The View from

The Crow's Nest



Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Historical Society

Spring 2015 / Issue XXV

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

The Casino by Elizabeth Hutchison

By the late 1800s Mattapoisett's business had changed from shipbuilding to summer people. With the creation of summer colonies such as Crescent Beach, Pico Beach and Point Connett along with enclaves such as the Barnard family's "cottages," many families began vacationing in Mattapoisett. Summer life in Mattapoisett was quiet. Visitors enjoyed the beaches, clambakes, regattas, theater and gatherings at Purrington Hall - the only place in town sporting a hall big enough for a larger gathering. However, Purrington Hall left something to be desired. Built in 1857, the building was showing its age and the second floor hall was considered a fire trap. The area surrounding Purrington Hall did not hold much appeal either. Land adjacent to the hall was used as a dump and across the street was a tavern where idlers congregated. Many summer people felt they needed their own place to gather.

Mrs. J. Norman Jackson, nee Sophia Langdon Ward, of Philadelphia was a summer resident of Mattapoisett and it is she who had the idea to form a casino for summer residents in order to meet their social needs. Casinos in the late 1800s were social and sports clubs, not places for gambling, and it was Mrs. Jackson's hope that Mattapoisett summer residents would join her in creating one for their special town.



Image of the Casino from the Society's postcard collection

On September 6, 1888, 18 people subscribed to this idea and formed the Quadequina Company. No one is sure why this name was chosen. Quadequina was a Wampanoag and the brother of Massasoit. He, Massasoit and Governor Carver signed a Treaty of Mutual Protection in March 1621. The Wampanoag had a long history in Mattapoisett and this may be why Quadequina's name was used by the founders of the Casino. Colonel J. Lewis Stackpole was made temporary chairman, Mr. Rogers L. Barstow was made temporary clerk and by-laws were agreed upon. Sixteen days later, Mr. J. Norman Jackson appeared before the justice of the peace in Mattapoisett attesting to the facts of the organization. Mr. J. Robb Maury was elected first president of the Casino and each of the 18 subscribers to the Quadequina Company became shareholders.

Now that the governing structure of the Casino was in place, there was, of course, the need for land on which to build it. On June 1, 1889, the annual meeting of the shareholders was held at Mr. A. Sigourney Bird's house at One North Street. During this meeting, the shareholders voted to accept Mr. Bird's gift of 1.5 acres of land north of Water Street contingent upon procuring access from Water Street. This problem was solved by Mrs. Patience B. Bowlin who offered to sell Quadequina Company a strip of land connecting Mr. Bird's land to Water Street for \$200. Her offer was accepted and her land became the Casino's driveway. The directors of the Quadequina Company also voted to make Mr. Bird a life member of the Casino as a thank you for his gift.

August 1889 saw the beginning of construction of the Casino building by Ellis B. Purrington of Mattapoisett. The Casino was built for \$1,960.00 following the designs of Andrews, Jacques & Rantoul, architects from Boston who designed many buildings on the National Register of Historic Places including the Hartford Club in Connecticut and Governor Frank West Rollins House in Concord, New Hampshire. Construction moved along quickly,

(continued on next page)



The Casino (continued from cover)

and the first social event, a hop, was held on October 12, 1889 even though the Casino was not fully completed.

The first season offered subscription rates of \$6.00 per season, \$3.00 per month, \$1.00 per week, and \$20.00 for a family for the season. According to Edward Wood Jr.'s book *Old Mattaposiett: A Summer Portrait*, "approximately 125 people actively used the Casino its first season, inclusive of original shareholders, spouses, children, and a few other members, most of whom quickly bought shares."

In 1890 the Casino offered a 4th of July celebration, a candy scrape, hops, teas, a fair for its benefit, a library sporting books and magazine subscriptions, and the first tennis court built in town. The Casino became a center for tennis in Mattapoisett, and remains that way today, 125 years later, as the Mattapoisett Casino Tennis Club.

A free standing building was added to the Casino in 1894 to house a kitchen, card room, small library and a privy. A well was also drilled and equipped with a windmill to provide water. In 1902 "automobiles were excluded from the Casino grounds." In 1906, "a new tennis court was added making it possible to play four matches at once." During World War I, Red Cross workshops were held at the Casino where the ladies made bandages, dressings and socks for the Allied troops. When the U.S. entered the war, subscription teas were held in support of the Red Cross. In 1926 the kitchen building burnt down and 1927 saw two major additions to the Casino, a kitchen to the north and a library and card room to the east. The Casino was also hooked to Town water and plumbing. The total cost of \$5,250.00 was raised through the selling of notes to members.

The 1930s saw backgammon tournaments, dances, teas, art exhibits, and water sports off of Barnard's Wharf in Cannonville. In 1932, Clayton McMichael organized a trip to Wellfleet in order to view the eclipse of the sun. He reserved a private coach for Casino members on the New Haven Railroad eclipse excursion train from Boston and the Mattapoisett group embarked at the Buzzards Bay station for a day of picnicking, exploring the dunes and observing the eclipse.

During World War II, the Casino was closed for three seasons: 1943, 1944, and 1945, although two tennis courts remained open for play. After the war in 1949, Mary W. Barnard Curtis deeded Barnard's Wharf to the Casino. The amount of children at the Casino also increased dramatically and a children's play area was created on the west side of the Casino in place of the old croquet courts. Entertainment for the children was regularly provided.

In 1961, at the urging of Jane Prouty Smith, among others, a new tennis facility was built and a bangboard area was created to the west on land donated by the Hinsdale, Blake and Oliver families. Andrew Oliver was a beloved figure at the Casino during the 1970s giving "Original utterances" at the 4th of July and Labor Day celebrations. These short inspiring speeches on various topics were always met with enthusiasm.

Reorganization of The Quadequina Company, a non-profit, came in 1986. Shares were done away with and shareholders became permanent members. The Quadequina Company became a private club just in time for its Centennial Celebration on September 3, 1988. "The Casino's centennial was celebrated at a dance held from 9:00 pm to 1:00 am with music by Gid Loring. Skits were presented, dessert was served, and the guests were attired in "creative black tie" or turn-of-the-century costumes. Dinner parties were given beforehand, and 125 were present at the Casino. On Labor Day more than 150 members and guests attended the centennial luncheon and watched the mixed-doubles tennis tournament....In its one hundredth year of operation, the Casino's operating expenses were approximately \$24,000. One hundred years before, in 1890, the first year of operation, the Casino's receipts from dues and gifts were approximately \$660, with a credit balance of \$234 remaining at year-end."

Today, tennis is a predominate function of the Casino, but it began as an amusement played haphazardly. The game steadily grew in popularity over the years at the Casino, helped along by dedicated supporters such as "Walter H. Trumbull of Weston, Massachusetts...and his wife Mary Winsor Trumbull [who] came as a summer residents in 1947. Walter Trumbull organized innumerable tournaments and

with others, brought the quality of Casino competition to a new peak." Today, the Casino continues to be a center for tennis enthusiasts in Mattapoisett and will do so for years to come.

- Quotations for this article were taken from *Old Mattaposiett: A Summer Portrait* by Edward F. R. Wood, Jr., a copy of which can be found at the Mattapoisett Free Public Library.

Things About Town.

All things point to a lively season among the summer guests. We have it on good authority that festivities will open with a rush on July 4th, when the Casino will be the scene of an all-day round gayety.

The tennis court, near the edifice over which the star spangled banner has waved so proudly the past week, is being pushed rapidly to completion, and it is very probable that a grand hop will close the exercises of the day. The BUZZARD will be on the outskirts of the neighboring woods during part of the day, and will endeavor to tell its readers on the morrow in an inoffensive manner some of the most important events of the occasion.

From The Buzzard newspaper June 28, 1890



Summer Exhibit

From Scrimshaw to Survival: Sophia Mean's Descendants and the Town of Mattapoisett

It may be surprising to some that scrimshaw can be related to Old Rochester Regional Junior High School's Survival Program which many Mattapoisett residents, their children, and even their grandchildren have participated in-but it is! Descendants of Sophia Means, a Boston woman who came to Mattapoisett at the beginning of the 20th century, have been involved with collecting scrimshaw and other fine works as well as making the Survival program possible. This year's summer exhibit demonstrates how people and families contribute to their towns in lasting ways, helping to create a rich cultural fabric and unique town identity.



Hikers heading out on Expedition



Survival Campfire, 1995

This exhibit will also debut some beautiful pieces from the museum's collections that have been undergoing restoration. Notable is a female wooden Neo-classical sculpture which was formerly bracketed to the harbor side of Sophia Mean's house, known as the Piers, when the home was owned by her daughter, Martha Means Hinsdale. We will also display a David Crockett weathervane, scrimshaw, and other collectibles that were originally owned by the Hinsdale family.

At this point you may be wondering how Survival fits in. Mary McGregor Means, Sophia Mean's daughter, married Horace Field, Sr., a Mattapoisett native

whose family summered in Northfield, MA. Their descendent, Horace Field III,

saw a need for the Survival Program to have a dedicated place to use, so he gave them permission to use his property in Northfield, MA.

We invite you to visit us this summer to engage with this fun and interesting exhibit as you encounter new pieces from our collections and perhaps reminisce about your own Survival experience. The exhibit opens July 1 to the public with a June 25 Members Only Preview at 5pm. The museum will be open Wednesday through Saturday in July and August from 1 to 4pm. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$2 for children (under 6 free), and free for Members.



Hikers heading up the Notch, 2003

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 Elizabeth Hutchison at (508) 758-2844 or email mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net with any questions.





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Mendell Endowment

A special thank you to the following donors who helped create the Mendell Endowment fund last year, to honor Charles S. Mendell and Seth F. Mendell for their work at the Mattapoisett Historical Society and their dedication to preserving Mattapoisett history. The purpose of the endowment is to fund curatorial staff and to sustain and grow the Society for future generations. Add your name to this special list by making a gift to the Mendell Endowment fund.

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From the Curator's Desk

by Elizabeth Hutchison

The spring has been busy here at the museum as we gear up for our summer season. I have begun rearranging the Rowland Research room in an effort to gain more storage and work space. The chaos of moving things has been quite interesting as I am actually going through collections and rediscovering some great objects such as a Boy Scouts of America hand book for boys from 1904 and a beautiful silk wall hanging brought back from Hilo, Hawaii in the early 20th century. As rearranging continues, I am sure we will come across other treasures which I will be posting to Facebook, so be sure to Friend us to get an insider's look into our collections.

Our summer exhibit From Scrimshaw to Survival: Sophia Mean's Descendants and the Town of Mattapoisett will be opening on July 1. This look into how one family significantly contributed to Mattapoisett over a century is a thought-provoking, fun exhibit that allows us all to think about the ways we positively add to our own town. Notably, From Scrimshaw to Survival will feature the debut of some wonderful pieces from our collections such as a Neo-Classical wooden female statue and a weathervane from the Hinsdale House, as well as harpoon templates and prototypes created by F. Gilbert Hinsdale among other treasures. The exhibit will also allow our visitors to take an enjoyable look into a Junior High School rite of passage: Survival. On top of our exhibit, we are again offering a full Calendar of Events for adults, families and children. Be sure to read through the Calendar of Events for the summer listed on the following page and mark your calendars. You can also follow our Facebook page or visit our website at www.mattapoisetthistoricalsociety.org to keep informed about upcoming events. New this spring, our website is now set-up to allow you to renew or become a member or make a donation. Progress certainly makes life easier!

If you are interested in volunteering at the museum this summer, we would love to have you. One afternoon of volunteering makes a huge difference, especially as we tackle our summer project of photographing, recording information about and creating a condition report of each of our clothing accessories such as hats, bonnets, fans and parasols. Those interested in joining us can call the museum at 508-758-2844 or send an email to mattapoisett.museum@verizon.net for more information. A training session to orient volunteers to the museum, the summer exhibit, and the cataloging project for the summer will be held on June 22 at 10:00 am and June 23 at 2:00 pm. We hope that you will join us and add some new faces to a wonderful group of dedicated people who make a significant contribution to the efforts of the Mattapoisett Historical Society.

WORD SEARCH by Lisa Hill Mattapoisett Casino

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JACKSON
SOCIAL
RECREATIONAL
MAURY
BUZZARD
STACKPOLE
BARSTOW
QUADEQUINA
BIRD
BOWLIN
PURRINGTON

TENNIS
DANCING
CROQUET
POOL TABLE
BRIDGE
BACKGAMMON
COTTAGES
CHILDREN
BARNARD
RED CROSS



Mattapoisett Historical Society

Calendar of Events

July 1	Summer 2015 Mattapoisett Historical Society Opens for the Season at 1:00 pm. Open: July - August, Wednesday through Saturday, 1:00 - 4:00 pm. Closed on July 4. \$5 Adults, \$2 children, under 6 and members free.					
July 8	Ice Cream Social at 6:15 pm. Celebrate summer with an ice cream sundae before heading to the concert at the Gazebo in Shipyard Park. Rain Date July 15. Free, donations accepted.					
July 9	Tour of the Field Property with the Mattapoisett Land Trust at 10:00 am . Join us for a guide walking tour of the Field Property with the Mattapoisett Land Trust. Free, donations accepted. Meet at the Field Property on Mattapoisett Neck Road.					
July 16	Children's Tea Party at 3:00 pm . Experience an old fashioned tea party with iced tea, treats and games. \$2 donation; members free.					
July 18	Walking Tour of the Waterfront at 2:00 pm. Learn about the little town that built the whalers for Nantucket and New Bedford. Explore the waterfront streets and wharves where the action took place. Free with Museum admission (\$5 Adults, \$2 children, under 6 and members free). Meet at the Mattapoisett Historical Society.					
July 22	New Bedford Whaling and Mattapoisett's Ships at 6:30 pm. Join Seth Mendell for a look into Mattapoisett's role in the New Bedford Whaling Industry. \$5 donation; members free. Mattapoisett Free Public Library, 7 Barstow Street.					
July 23	Little Explorers: Old-Time Kids at 3:00 pm. Children ages 4 - 6 will explore what life was like for Mattapoisett children 150 years ago through activities, games and a craft. \$2 donation; members free.					
July 30	Old Fashioned Candy Tasting at 3:00 pm. Children are invited to taste popular candy from the early 1900s and vote for their favorite. We'll also make a craft to take home. \$2 donation; members free.					
August 1	Walking Tour of the Waterfront at 2:00 pm. See July 18 for details.					
August 6	Family Scavenger Hunt at 2:00 pm . Families are invited to bring a bucket down to the Mattapoisett Land Trust's Munroe Property and join the MLT and the MHS for a fun afternoon of exploring the flora and fauna of Mattapoisett's Harbor. Free; donations accepted. Meet at the Munroe property adjacent to the Town Wharf.					
August 13	Little Explorers: Maritime Art at 3:00 pm. Children ages 4 - 6 will explore Maritime art, creating their own artwork to take home. \$2 donation; members free.					
August 15	Walking Tour of the Waterfront at 2:00 pm. See July 18 for details.					
August 19	Six Historic Russian Cities with Seth Mendell at 6:30 pm. Enjoy seeing and learning about 140 historic landmarks in six Russian cities through a unique Powerpoint presentation. \$5 donation; members free. Mattapoisett Free Public Library, 7 Barstow Street. Mattapoisett Historical Society Facebook Page SMALL TOWN-BIG ART SHOW 2014 May 16, 610, 730th Event Recently.					
September 6	Captain Charles Bryant at 5:30 pm. Hear about the life of Captain Charles Bryant who was born in Rochester, became territorial governor of Alaska and at the end of his life, became the owner/operator of the Bay View Hotel. \$5 donation; members free. Meet at the Gazebo in Shipyard Park. In case of rain, meet at					

the Mattapoisett Historical Society.



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The New Bedford Harbor Sea Chantey Chorus was back again this May for another springtime concert full of toe-tapping fun.





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