

The View from The Crow's Nest



Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Historical Society

November 2017 / Issue XXXI

Preserving the past for the benefit of the future.

Over the River and Through the Woods To Aunt Keziah's We Go

by Kyle DeCicco-Carey

Early municipal record keeping in America consisted of recording town business along with life events of the town residents such as births, deaths and marriages. These records were often written down in numbered volumes or books. Book IV of Rochester town records include the births of the citizens of Rochester in the late 1700s and early 1800s. One particular entry records the birth dates of the children of Lucinda and William Parlow, Jr. They had ten children from 1789 to 1812. The first child noted was Keziah born September 30, 1789.

Aside from historical value, there is nothing remarkable about this entry of births and the many others like it. But in the fall of 1886 a reporter from the Boston Daily Globe was sent out to investigate the life of this child who was born during the first term of President George Washington. He arrived in Mattapoisett asking for directions to a house deep in the woods on the outskirts of town to conduct an interview.

"Take the road toward Marion out to the Quaker Meeting House," he was told by one of the locals knowing exactly who the reporter was looking for. Many people came to town to make this visit including Frances Cleveland, the wife of President Grover Cleveland.

The reporter followed the directions, riding through the woods behind the Quaker Meeting House on present day Marion Road. He came to a clearing where a small cottage stood surrounded by large pines. He knocked on the door. When the door opened a small, elderly woman with snow-white hair greeted him.

"Hitch your horse to the tree and come right in. I know what you want," she ordered him.

"You want to see the old lady that lives in the woods. I have lots of visitors ... They think I'm crazy to live out here alone in the woods, but I tell 'em that's what keeps me well and healthy." Perhaps she was right. Aunt Keziah, as she was known, was now 103 years old. She insisted that she was born September 30, 1783 not 1789.



Aunt Keziah, c. 1880s

(continued on next page)



Over the River and Through the Woods To Aunt Keziah's We Go (continued from cover)

Keziah Parlow was born in Marion at the site of what became the Marion railroad station. By the time she was ten years old she was sent to live with



Fig. 2 Richard Randall's gravestone in Center Cemetery, Rochester.

a local preacher where she worked and received an education. Around 1807 she traveled to Smith Mills in Dartmouth where she taught school.

At some point she relocated back to the tri town area and in 1810 she married Richard Randall. Mr. Randall was a much older man, about 55 years old at the time of their marriage. In 1812 when war broke out, Mr. Randall volunteered to serve as a coast guard. He didn't see any action and returned home. In 1815 he contracted yellow fever and died.

The same Book IV that lists the birth of Keziah, lists the children born to Richard and Keziah Randall on the next page. It notes they had three children; Arethusa born in 1812, Roxalana born in 1814 and an unnamed daughter born in 1816.

This daughter born in 1816 may have been Lucretia who died in a fire early in 1824. Keziah left the home for a little bit while the children stayed inside. It was suggested later that Lucretia's clothing had caught fire, she panicked and ran around the room spreading the flames. When Keziah returned she found Lucretia severely burned and dying nearby a cradle that had, what was reported to be Keziah's infant daughter.

Keziah pulled the baby from the flames that were surrounding the cradle.

The baby was most likely Matilda, who was born in April of 1822. Vital Records of Rochester, MAs does not note the father of Matilda but it may have been Ezra Read of Dartmouth. Ezra and Keziah filed an intention to marry in December of 1822 but apparently never married.

Keziah claimed to have a son who was living in Virginia by the 1880s. She kept a photograph of herself standing with him in front of her house along with photographs of her grandchildren hanging on her walls.

Aunt Keziah managed to support herself and children over the years and put money away. By 1835 she moved to Mattapoisett to work for a man as his housekeeper. Not long after going to work for this man, he passed away and willed his property to her. She lived in his old log home for a short time before having a new house built on the property around 1837.

She would spend the next several decades in this home. She remained active working in her garden growing her own food and otherwise running her own farm. Being engaged in active out door work is what Aunt Keziah credited to her having lived a long life.

She nursed herself when she was sick using herbal remedies, made her own root beer and made rugs for her house. Near the end of her life she noted that girls of the day did not learn any useful skills such as spinning and weaving. "Now they play the piano, go to school and get so lazy that they die early."

They eat too much sugar and "the o-so sweet stuff" and don't know how to dress. "They wear a little mite of a plate on top of their head and go half naked" she said of Victorian era young women.

"Girls were prettier then than they are now," she added.



Despite living alone in the woods, Aunt Keziah was not a hermit. She welcomed visitors from 'Poisett as she referred to Mattapoisett. She made trips to see her daughter, Arethusa in Fall River and grandchildren in New Bedford and Brockton.

In 1889 Aunt Keziah's friends celebrated her 100th birthday. They took her to a picnic and gave her \$100. Despite this generosity she was quietly disappointed. For her birthday she had been hoping for a headstone for her grave.

She had a fear that when she died she would be buried in an unmarked grave. She had put away money so she could place a headstone on her husband's grave at the First Parish Cemetery in Rochester, with the phrase "We shall meet again" inscribed on it.

Later, summer residents in Mattapoisett would furnish Keziah with a headstone that was placed in Pine Island Cemetery. In the months before she passed away, she could be seen wandering the cemetery where she would visit her own grave and work on it, preparing for her final resting place.

In the summer of 1892 she became very ill, was confined to bed and soon slipped in to unconsciousness. Not long before, Aunt Keziah's grandchildren were visiting her. As she lay in bed, one of them said just before leaving, "I'm going home, Aunt Keziah."

Pointing upward, Aunt Keziah replied, "So am I."



Grave site of Keziah Randall, Pine Island Cemetery, Mattapoisett, MA

Thank You!

A special thank you to the following people, who donated generously of their time and talents:

- Peter Burlinson – for all your assistance in building display boards for our map exhibit.
- Ellen Flynn and Mary Lalli – for all your wonderful flower arrangements.
- Katherine Gaudet – for buying us a new projector to use for our events.
- Danny White – for your help in diagnosing and fixing our sound system.

Business Sponsors

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Town Wharf General Store



Massachusetts Cultural Council

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



Annual Meeting 2017

by Leda Kim and Kathleen Damaskos

On September 17, the Historical Society held its Annual Meeting. We were pleased to have a considerable amount of members in attendance as the board reported on the past year's activities and completed some organizational business which required the approval of the members present.

Treasurer, Kathleen Damaskos gave an overview of our finances during the past year. The chart on the next page demonstrates our financial position. Most notably we operate at a loss, depending on our endowment to fund some operating expenses. As you can see, there is considerable money in restricted grants from the Community Preservation Commission, which supports continuing efforts to archive our materials, and the Cultural Council, which supports programs and exhibits. These funds need to last for the next two years.

There were two Bylaw Amendments which required a vote. The first was a change to the number of directors from exactly five to "at least five." Second, the voting membership age was changed from 18 to 16 as we hope to encourage participation from some of our younger folks.

The other major piece of business was the presentation of the Nominating Committee, which elected Jennifer McIntire and Kyle DeCicco-Carey as President and Vice President for 2-year terms. Four at-large members, Carole Clifford, Katherine Gaudet, Art Layton and Jill Sanford were elected for 3-year terms.

Our Curator, Jeff Miller, gave a brief recap of the milestones achieved during the past year. Much time was spent reorganizing areas, especially upstairs, to make it more easily accessible by anyone wishing to conduct research. Additionally, we added an online database that can be accessed from our website to allow people to view our collections. Part of cleaning out storage areas involved the identification of some – or, in the case of clothing irons, many – duplicate items, and adding them to the annual yard sale offerings. The newsletter also underwent a change and will now transition to two times annually with more content per issue.

Jenn McIntire talked a bit about getting our Strategic Planning Document online. She also discussed the success of our second Yard Sale and Community Picnic in concert with the Mattapoisett Land Trust. Jenn encouraged anyone wishing to volunteer to let us know as we are always in need of extra help whether to set up exhibits or to docent during the summer.

At the end of the business meeting we were fortunate to hear a presentation by Michael Esposito and Cynthia Redel who spoke about the history of their home on Ned's Point Road. They brought photographs, memorabilia such as menus, and other related items. Michael had a slide presentation which displayed changes to the house and grounds over the years.

Financial results for the first eight months of 2017 (January – August), as presented at the annual meeting:

- Operating activity continues to present the challenge of income keeping up expense. The annual appeal to members and friends in these last months of the year will determine whether operating activity ends "in the black."
- Restricted grants from our local Community Preservation Commission and Cultural Council have provided funding for special projects, primarily an estimated two years of archiving and cataloguing work.
- Endowment and investments continue to grow with both contributions and investment returns.



Annual Meeting 2017 (continued)

Income and Expense Statement	Operations	Restricted Grants	Endowment	Total
Income				
Public Support	10,737			
Earnings from Sales, Admissions and Memberships	9,175			
Events	3,034			
Local Government Grants		43,812		
Endowment Gifts			4,000	
Investment Returns			13,925	
	22,946	43,812	17,925	
Expense	29,037	12,330	0	
Surplus/Deficit	-6,091	31,482	17,925	43,316

Balance Sheet

	31-Aug-17
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	6,582
Grants Receivable	43,053
Inventories for Sale of Use	9,476
Total Current Assets	59,111
Other Assets	
Marketable Securities	285,724
TOTAL ASSETS	344,835
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Equity	
Unrestricted Net Assets	222,491
Temp Restricted Net Assets	43,053
Perm Restrict Net Assets	35,975
Net Income	43,316
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	344,835

Off Season Museum Hours

The Curator is available during the off season on Wednesdays from 9:00 am - 12:00 p.m. or by appointment.

Mattapoisett Historical Society

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Jennifer McIntire

Vice President

Kyle DeCicco-Carey

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Leda Kim

Treasurer

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Abigail Field

Katherine Gaudet

Art Layton

Jill Sanford

Alison Van Keuren

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Seth Mendell

Curator

Jeffrey Miller

Crow's Nest Editor

Mary Beth Morse

Mattapoisett Movers and Shakers

by Jeffrey Miller

Next summer our exhibit will be an exploration of Mattapoisett's 'movers & shakers.' We are just beginning the planning process, but we would love your input. What is a 'mover & shaker' to you? Who are some people you would like to see featured? Send us your ideas! If you have any thoughts, please send me an email at info@mattapoisetthistoricalsociety.org or give me a call at 508-758-2844.



Creepy Dolls of the Mattapoisett Historical Society

By Kyle DeCicco-Carey

Throughout history girls and boys have played with dolls. For some children, the dolls were alive with personalities and provided companionship. However, children grow up, the dolls get pushed aside, and the dolls become lifeless. We are fortunate that some of these historical, well loved, and innocent looking dolls were saved and donated to us.

Did we say innocent looking? Maybe you think they are more sinister looking ... we'll let you decide.

This doll (right) was donated by Ethel Ellis Taves (1897-1979) in 1976. The doll measures 22" with a china head and wood body. Dressed in a period white lace dress with pearl earrings, Mrs. Taves believed the doll was German in origin. It may have been manufactured by the Kestner doll company. The doll was given to her for her first Christmas in 1897 by her grandfather. Ethel married in 1919 at the age of 22 and worked as a bookkeeper at a cotton mill. She and her husband Frank do not appear to have had any children making it likely that little Ethel was the only child to have cared for this doll.



Ethel Ellis Taves Doll



George and Martha Washington

George Washington was a popular figure throughout the first full century of the new republic. This George (left) measures 24" and is made of painted composition and cloth, dressed in an officer's attire with cape and hat. George and Martha Washington were gifted by Douglas Kerr in 1965. Doll possibly manufactured by the Kestner doll company, Waltershausen, Thuringia, circa 1860-1890.

Martha Washington (left) is a twenty-four inch, composition painted doll with a lace collar on a purple satin dress with embroidered roses covered by a silk flower print shawl. She is the companion doll to George Washington. Doll possibly manufactured by the Kestner doll company, Waltershausen, Thuringia, circa 1830-1860.

Provenance research is still being conducted on this doll (right). She measures 18" and appears to be made of porcelain and cloth with kid leather gloves and shoes. She wears turquoise earrings, woven dress with a plaid, pleat detail and a removable bonnet. The doll may have been manufactured between 1860 and 1890.



French Fashion Doll



Ellanee

While this doll (left) is dressed in a circa 1870-1890 embroidered dress, the doll itself was most likely manufactured circa 1950. She measures 19" and is made of hard plastic with molded hair and is stamped on lower back "20F-5 Ellanee."

By the 1950s, dolls such as this baby doll were made for girls to practice nurturing skills as they were expected to grow up and be stay at home mothers. However, this doll would witness the women's rights movements of the 1960s and the



Creepy Dolls of the Mattapoissett Historical Society (continued)

evolution of traditional roles for both women and men as more women became breadwinners for their families and men took on more active roles in parenting.

The provenance of the doll isn't clear. A note in the historical society indicates that the doll or the doll's dress belonged to Florence Purrington Mendell (1871-1949). However, the accession record notes that the dress, along with three other dresses, were gifted by Ruth Martocci (1909-1998) in 1994.

Elizabeth (right) is 24" with red hair and curls, bisque porcelain and wood, wearing a maroon and white period dress. She was manufactured by Armand Marseille in Köppelsdorf, Thuringen, circa 1913. The doll was given to the Mattapoissett Historical Society in 1981 by Clara Tinkham Perkins (1902-1990) and was originally owned by Clara's sister, Elizabeth Tinkham (1906- ?) for whom the doll is named.



Elizabeth

The Great Community Picnic

by Kathleen Damaskos

On August 3, 2017, more than 350 community members, friends, and neighbors enjoyed the 2nd Great Community Picnic, co-hosted by the Mattapoissett Historical Society and Mattapoissett Land Trust. The Munro Preserve on the harbor provided a magical setting, with rows of pristine, white linen-covered tables, a gentle breeze, and live music. As dusk descended, festive twinkle lights and hurricane candles lent additional ambiance.

Picnic-goers brought beautiful centerpieces for their tables and the makings for delicious dinners. Wine, beer, and oysters were available for purchase. Complimentary hors d'oeuvres were passed.

For MHS and MLT, the picnic was once again a satisfying combination of friend-raiser and fund-raiser with each organization netting community goodwill and approximately \$3,000 after expenses. Feedback was positive and all signs point to a third event next summer.

Our sincerest thanks are due to Andrea and Nils at The Inn on Shipyard Park for their contribution of hors d'oeuvres, Bob Fields for his donated Coot Cove fresh oysters, David Dunn for arranging free live music by his own band, Huxter, along with Charlie Phlps and Grace Morrison, and the picnic planners from both MHS and MLT: Jenn McIntire, Mike Huguenin, Colby Barrows, Sharon Chown, Arthur & Kathleen Damaskos, Peter & Melissa Davies, Chris Demakis, Ellen Flynn, and Sandy Hering.



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. 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!



Curator's Corner

by Jeffrey Miller

As usual, things were a little hectic around here over the summer, but in the end everything went smoothly (more-or-less.) A special thank you to all our docents – we couldn't do it without you!

We have also been busy this fall, with a lot of fun events going on, including an open mic, a photography seminar series and a book signing by a local author. Be sure to keep an eye on our website, Facebook page, or emails for the latest news on upcoming events.

We had some great comments about our summer exhibit, *Mapping Mattapoisett*. Many people seemed to appreciate the larger labels and simple look of the exhibit. Unfortunately, with the limited space available I could only fit a limited number of maps in the exhibit. Here are some that didn't quite make the cut.



This map is from the New Topographical Atlas of Surveys, Plymouth County, published by the L.J. Richards Co. in 1903. They are very high quality maps, but unfortunately the atlas is large and difficult to display. Crafty readers may recognize this as I used a section of the map in the last issue to illustrate the trolley route.

(continued on next page)

WORD SEARCH

Rocks, Ledges and Points by Lisa Hill

Strawberry
Angelica
Connett
Neds
Randall
Barstow
Snow
Sunken

Gallatin
Ram
Cormorant
Nye
May Point
Seal
Cleveland

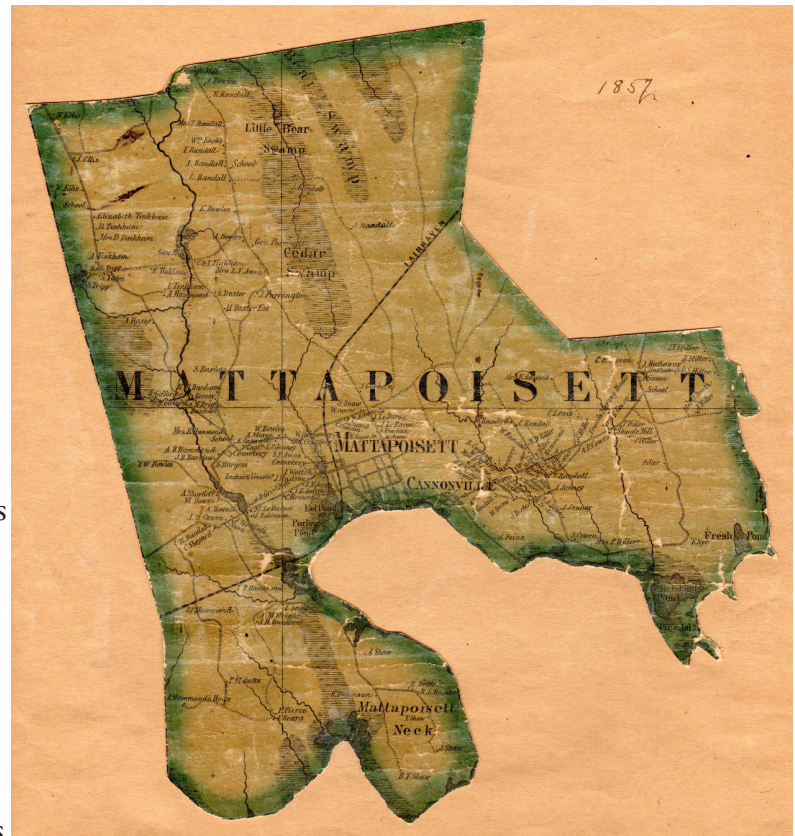
Y	D	N	G	T	R	A	N	A	R	T	C
T	W	A	D	S	S	I	A	S	A	N	T
C	O	N	N	E	T	T	V	S	M	N	E
E	T	L	A	A	S	P	E	T	A	E	N
C	S	L	L	A	D	N	A	R	Y	K	R
T	R	L	E	S	V	N	O	A	P	N	L
A	A	M	V	C	G	M	A	W	O	U	I
G	B	A	E	E	R	N	T	B	I	S	A
N	L	B	L	O	R	S	D	E	N	L	N
A	C	I	C	O	O	B	Y	R	T	W	N
N	C	O	Y	O	R	N	G	R	E	L	C
A	M	O	R	S	T	T	N	Y	I	E	R



Curator's Corner (continued)



The map on the left is fascinating, but unfortunately, it just isn't that interesting to look at, as there is a lot of empty space. It is a survey of the Mattapoisett town boundaries, done in 1899. In the accompanying text, they note how some of their measurements are significantly different than previous measurements. For example: "The westerly line is the original line between Rochester and Fairhaven as established in 1836, but corner 3, at Saunder's land, appears to be about 363 feet further south from Tripp's corner than stated in the act..."



The map to the right has been cut out of a larger work that showed all of Plymouth County. It was produced by Henry Francis Walling, a prolific mapmaker in the 1850s and 1860s. In 1855, Walling was commissioned to update the official state map, and he made a series of wall-size county maps, from which the current example has been removed and pasted onto a thin paper backing. It wasn't included in the exhibition largely because of its condition and its dark colors make it difficult to read.

Recent and Upcoming Events

by Jennifer McIntire

Holiday Craft Fair

It's that time again! The Mattapoisett Historical Society's Arts and Crafts Holiday Fair will be held this year on Saturday, December 9 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. The fair will feature hand-made gifts by many talented, local artisans: soap, dried arrangements, confectionery, photography, wool accessories, etc. You'll find unique gifts for everyone on your list!

(continued on next page)



Recent and Upcoming Events (continued)

Darcy Lee, local author

The Mattapoisett Free Public Library and the Mattapoisett Historical Society hosted an author reading and book signing with Mattapoisett native Darcy Lee on Saturday, November 18. Darcy Lee's new book is entitled *Ghosts of Plymouth, Massachusetts*. As a child, Ms. Lee developed what became a lifelong curiosity about the paranormal and made it her hobby to collect ghost-story books on her travels throughout the world. Plymouth is known worldwide as America's Hometown, landing place of the Pilgrims in 1620 and home of the first Thanksgiving. But the real story of the town is a tale of grim beginnings, plague, desperation, massacre, murder and fear. Author Darcy H. Lee exposes the haunting acts that lie beneath Plymouth's cherished history.

Photo Seminar

We hosted our first Photography Seminar Series in which three local photographers shared their work. The first was Deb Fraine on Wednesday, November 1. Deb is an occupational therapist and yoga instructor with a passion for photography. She enjoys exploring a variety of settings and lighting conditions through her photographs.

Corinna Raznikov presented on Wednesday, November 8. A professional photographer, Corinna's photography is about the joy of the human spirit or healing the human spirit. She is constantly taking on new challenges – most recently photographing shelter cats with her daughter.

The seminar wrapped up with Peter Mello's presentation on Wednesday, November 15. Peter is the managing director of WaterFire Providence. He believes that the power of art can change people's lives. Through his *#shipyardpark* project started in January 2011 and *#tinyfilm* project launched in May 2016, he practices his creative habit every day.

Open Mic

On Sunday, October 8 we hosted our third magical open mic event at the Mattapoisett Historical Society. Performances were joyful, emotionally moving, fun-loving, cute, engaging, and educational. All present were entertained with stories, poems, history, and live music ranging from classical to pop on guitar, ukulele, and violin. Our fabulous performers were: Charlie Cann, Uhlin Siblings, Charlotte Hess, Stacie Charbonneau Hess, Allison McGuire, Lilly Farrell, Jody Bauer, Lois Ennis, Tom Waldron, and Katherine Gaudet.

Thank you to all the performers!





Seth's Talks

Once again Seth Mendell drove north for the summer and dedicated himself to the Mattapoissett Historical Society. He regaled large crowds five different times with his historical walking tour of Mattapoissett. The Mattapoissett Free Public Library meeting room was packed to the gills for all six



of his seminar lectures focusing on the inter-war years (1918-1939). Seth also attracted a crowd for his Labor Day Weekend lecture about Cuttyhunk Island. In his spare time, he repaired our signpost, fixed some gutters, and took care of many other odd jobs.

Thank you, Seth!

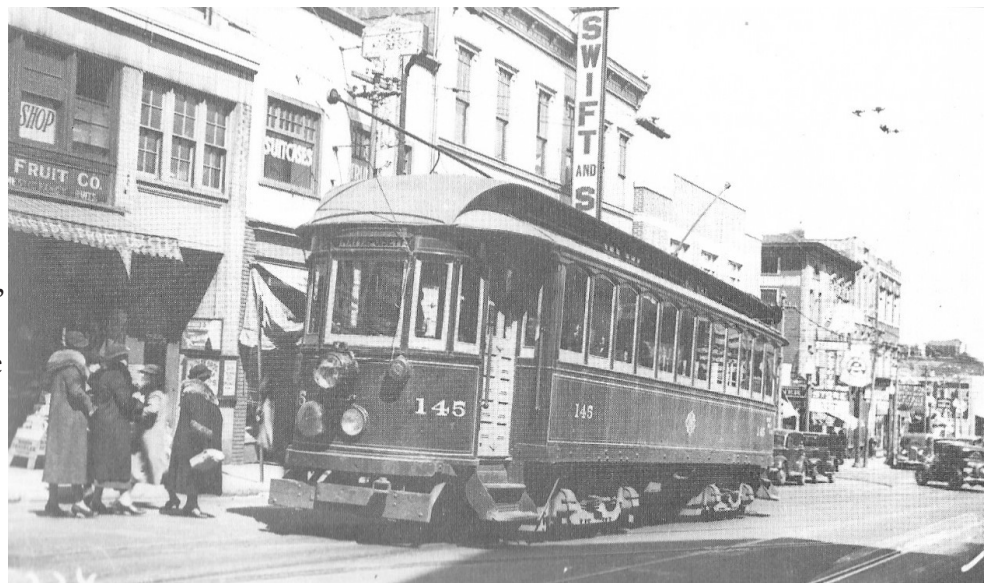
Mattapoissett Trolley Followup

By Jeffrey Miller

We received some great feedback about “Cool, clean, and convenient”: Mattapoissett and the Electric Trolley,” an article in our last issue that outlined the history of the trolley service that ran through town in the early 20th century. A couple of people have contacted me with more information about the line, however, so I thought it would be worthwhile to publish an update.

In the article, I wrote that the last trolley ran through Mattapoissett in 1927. As it turns out, trolleys kept running to Mattapoissett from New Bedford, while the line east of Mattapoissett was converted to buses. While the trolleys did not run through Mattapoissett anymore, the service to and from New Bedford continued for several more years. It wasn't until at least 1935 that the other section of the line was shut down, and according to Don Farwell, who lived on Church Street at the time, it may have even been a year or two later.

Thanks to Don Farwell and Larry Velte for sharing their knowledge!



Taken in April 1935, this photo shows a trolley car with its destination listed as Mattapoissett (from *From Boston to the Berkshires* by Stephen P. Carlson (1990))



MATTAPOISETT HISTORICAL SOCIETY *Preserving the Past for the Benefit of the Future*
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