

The View from The Crow's Nest



Newsletter of the Mattapoisett Historical Society

November 2018 / Issue XXXIII

Preserving the past for the benefit of the future.

The Autograph Collectors

by David R. Anderson

“Girls, you are in for a very special treat. Mrs. Wilson, former President Wilson’s wife, is coming to Mattapoisett in a few days to visit our friend Mrs. Hamlin.” My grandmother, Mary B.H. Ransom, was speaking to her daughters Louise (age 13) and Dorothy (age 11). The story came down to me from Louise, my mother, as she opened her autograph book to the page with Edith Bolling Wilson’s bold signature, writ large – it covered virtually all of top space on the 7 by 4 inch oblong page. Signed and dated “Mattapoisett Sept. 3rd 1923”, it precedes a page with Mrs. Hamlin’s less dramatic autograph “Huibertje Lansing Pruyin Hamlin. September 4th 1923.” She too had taken nearly the full width of the page to write her Dutch family name.

The girls were very excited. The brand new autograph books, leather bound in a fancy embossed gold foil decorated cover with a tropical island scene, were gifts from their mother made in

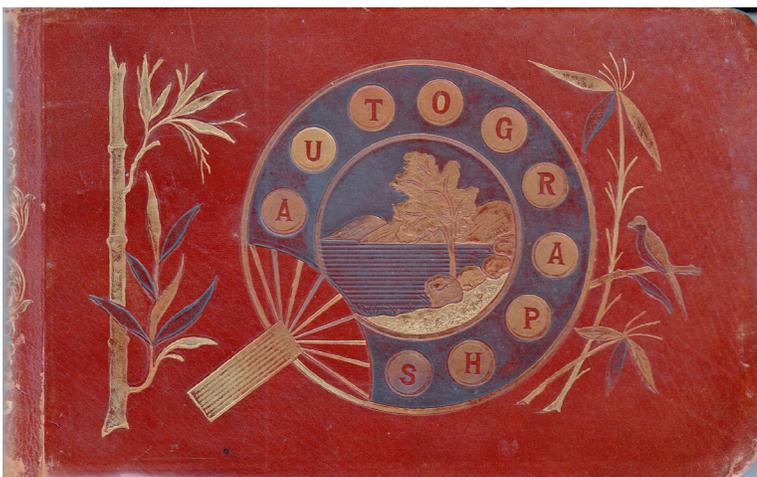


Louise and Dorothy Ransom.

anticipation of the visit. Blank then, they now hold several other autographs they collected over the next few years. These include many of Mattapoisett’s well known citizens, including George W. Harrington (Oct. 13, 1923) and Mary and William N Dexter (Dec. 31, 1923), as well as teachers, schoolmates, and family members.

The autograph books are replete with treasures. My father, Hayden L.V. Anderson, the Center School Principal from 1926 to 1928, had fallen in love with my mother by the time of his entry dated June 15, 1927. He illustrated it with a red-headed angel, wings spread and flying through the heavens, with this note: “Lou. Dear, Now I

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Louise Ransom’s autograph book.

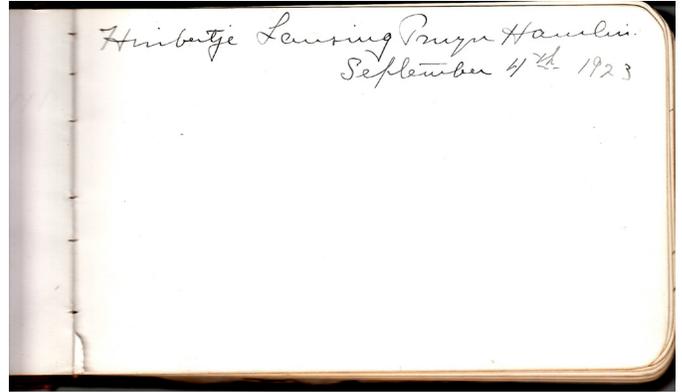
**The Autograph Collectors** (continued from cover)

know that there are red-headed angels.” When she got her turn to sign the book on July 16, 1933, Mom’s younger sister, Georgia, wrote “There are red-headed, er, demons too. For reference, turn to page 5.”

That was ninety-five years ago this summer. Edith Wilson, the former first lady, spent a ten day vacation at the Ned’s Point summer home of the Wilsons’ friends, Charles and Bertie (as she liked to be called) Hamlin. Mrs. Wilson arrived on August 27, 1923, three years and 11 months after the stroke which paralyzed her husband’s left side and placed her in the position of both caring for him and, in many instances, acting for him in the last 15 months of his second term. Those tasks which she loyally undertook with the help (and complicity) of his doctor and personal staff, left her “warn out.” As she put it in her autobiography published in 1939, “I felt my splendid health deserting me, and could hardly drag myself around.”

The Hamlins “begged that I come to them for a visit at Mattapoissett, Massachusetts, where the air was cool and bracing. I accepted.” When the time came, she took an overnight train from Washington to Providence “in a most comfortable drawing room.” Edith Benham, her social secretary, accompanied her on the trip. They were met by Mr. Hamlin who took them to breakfast at the “new Hotel in Providence” before driving them to Mattapoissett. From her published letters, her autobiography, and the account of her visit in Edward Wood’s *Old Mattapoissett: a summer portrait* (1995), it is possible to piece together a picture of her visit.

Treated royally and feted with teas and receptions, Mrs. Wilson made the most of her time here. The friends motored to Plymouth to visit the “Rock” and to Newport for the Horse Show. Back from the Horse Show, they found FDR’s yacht anchored



Huibertje Hamlin’s signature.

off the Hamlin’s pier. Roosevelt sent a crew member to invite Mrs. Wilson and the Hamlins to visit him on board, which they did. They visited Mrs. Hamlin’s sisters in Marion and Edith got in a game of pool with Mr. Hamlin. Elsewhere in her letters, Mrs. Wilson described “the real event of the day . . . the tea hour which in their house was almost a sacred rite . . . All their friends knew they would find them in at this hour and troops of them came . . . We would meet in a charming sun-room at the back of the house facing the blue waters of the Bay.”

On Sunday afternoon, September 2, “a number of people dropped in for tea” in response to Mrs. Hamlin’s open invitation to the community to meet Mrs. Wilson. According to Wood “Seventy-eight guests came . . . including not a few rock-ribbed Republican friends and neighbors who had bitterly opposed Wilson and the failed attempt to bring the United States into the League of Nations.” In the letter Charles Hamlin wrote to Woodrow Wilson on September 4, describing the event, he noted that Mrs. Hamlin had included the three members of the Democratic Town Committee. Not surprising, since she was such a staunch member of the party.

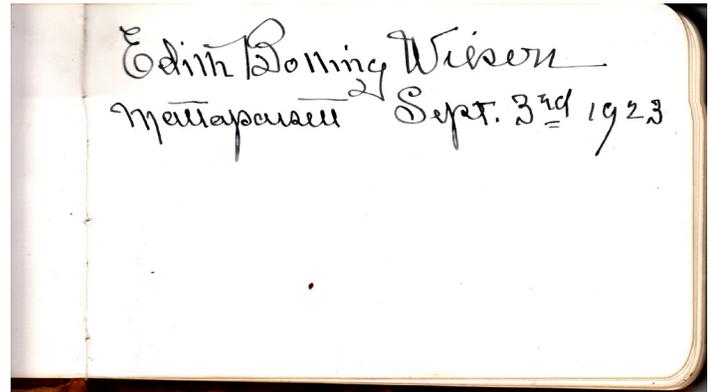
My grandmother, a Pine Island Road resident since 1908, became a good friend of Mrs. Hamlin in the course of their work together on the town’s Democratic Committee, and on its Women’s

The Autograph Collectors (continued)

Committee. Later, in the 1930's, Mrs. Hamlin would support Gram's appointment by FDR to be the town's Post Master.

Judging from the dates on the autographs, it seems likely that my grandmother, along with my mother and aunt, were invited to the Hamlins' afternoon teas on one or both of the next two days. My grandmother, from whom I learned my politics, was not about to pass up the opportunity for her daughters to meet and exchange a few words with an important Democratic Party figure. It would be an important moment in their civic and political education. She knew what she was doing. My mother became a life-long Democrat, and so am I. My aunt Dot was another story. She was more likely to reflect my grandfather's more conservative views. If Gramp was at the Sunday tea he was among the Republicans in attendance.

In her last letter from Mattapoisett to her husband, Edith wrote: "I do feel so refreshed and have a new outlook on the world. And I only hope that you may get some reflex from it when I get back." But it was not to be. As Patricia O'Toole writes in *The Moralists: Woodrow Wilson and the World He Made*, Edith returned to Washington "refreshed but unprepared for the sight of her husband ... the face she saw did not match the image she had taken with her ... She understood that a serious decline had begun." Indeed it had. The former president had only a few months to live. His notion that he might again become a candidate for the nation's highest office was fanciful, although, as O'Toole points out, he held to it almost to the very end. "We trust that this will be the first of many visits..." Charles Hamlin wrote in a gracious note to the President Wilson the day before his wife left Ned's Point to return to Washington. Unfortunately, he would not live to visit Mattapoisett, but as she described in her memoir, Mrs. Wilson, now a widow, returned in July of 1924 to spend three weeks at the Hamlin home "way off from every city sound, with life-giving air blowing in from Buzzard's Bay."



Edith Wilson's signature.

Acknowledgement

My thanks to my friend Patty O'Toole for sending me copies of the Wilsons' Mattapoisett correspondence from his published letters.

Mattapoisett Historical Society

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<i>Treasurer</i>	Jill Sanford	
Kathleen Damaskos	Alison Van Keuren	



Annual Meeting Update

By Jennifer McIntire

We are 60 years old this year! A large crowd gathered for our Annual Meeting held on September 16 at 2:00 pm. The Minutes of the 2017 Annual Meeting were read by Art Layton, Secretary followed by the Treasurer's Annual Report presented by Kathleen Damaskos, Treasurer and included in this newsletter. Kathleen Damaskos, Art Layton, Chris Demakis, Abigail Field, and Darcy Lee were re-elected or elected to serve on the Board of Directors.

Dr. Jeffrey Miller, Curator reported on his efforts to improve our exhibits. Thanks to the changes, our temporary exhibit of "Mattapoissett Movers & Shakers" will be on view for a full year instead of two months. The Mendell Room has been refashioned as the Mendell Maritime Gallery, the result is an informative and aesthetically pleasing presentation of shipbuilding, navigation, and maritime crafts. Jeff is also our Community Preservation Act Grant archivist. He is currently focusing his efforts on our extensive photograph collection and scanning all photos to be uploaded to our online database.

We received some important artifact donations this year. Mary Kate McGowan gave us a beautiful Nantucket basket crafted by her aunt Susan McGowan. Loal and Marie Raymond donated an 1880s buggy made in New Bedford which is proudly displayed in our Carriage House. And we added to our doll collection with a lovely doll handmade by Edna Dexter in about 1907. New acquisitions also included Mattapoissett Christmas ornaments from the 1980s as well as many interesting photos and documents.

My president's update relayed that our organization is going strong. Our board is energetic and full of great ideas. We continue to engage our community by providing programs, exhibits, and events that educate, entertain, and encourage participation. We feel a tremendous responsibility to preserve our collection and serve the community. Always mindful and intentional regarding our legacy, we strive to remain relevant and vital.

The board recently decided to rebrand as the Mattapoissett Museum. This will be a process, but we feel this new label is more appropriate for the role our organization is playing and has played over the last 60 years. 2018 has been busy: events have included an Open Mic event, Photographers' seminar, Holiday Craft Fair, Artists' Talks, and a Music Fest to celebrate our 60th Anniversary. We also hosted our 3rd annual yard sale as well as our 3rd annual Great Community Picnic. The picnic is a partnership with the Mattapoissett Land Trust.

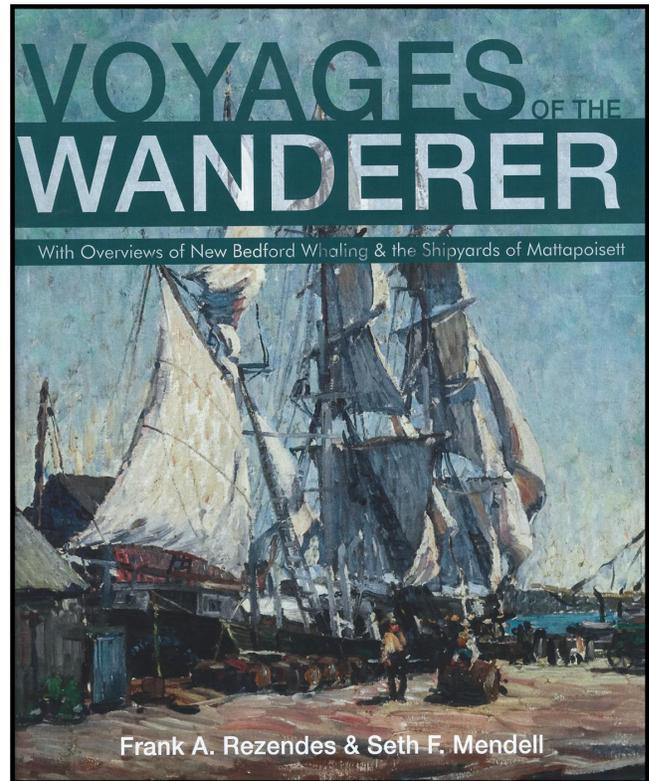
We are grateful to our membership. Many of you are so generous with time, talent, and treasure. Members are our life-blood. We work to serve you and are thankful for your support.

After the business of our meeting was complete, Seth Mendell shared his knowledge about the building of the Bark *Wanderer*. We then staged the grand opening of the Mendell Maritime Gallery with a ribbon cutting ceremony. Charles Mendell was a founder of this organization as well as our first curator. The Mendell Maritime Gallery is a particularly appropriate use of this space as Charles Mendell thoroughly researched shipbuilding in Mattapoissett. Seth, of course, has spent almost 30 years ensuring that the Mattapoissett Museum flourishes. His fundraising, fixing, and lecturing are vital. Members present then lined up as Seth signed copies of our latest publication: *Voyages of the Wanderer*. We sold books as well as pens made from salvaged *Wanderer* wood. Visitors enjoyed the new gallery and a wood turning demonstration by Daniel Manley (aka The Timeless Jotter).



AVAILABLE NOW

**Our newest publication:
Voyages of the Wanderer
\$15**



**Pens made from salvaged
bark *Wanderer* wood
\$95**

***Purchase both together
for \$100!***



*Be informed about all
upcoming museum events!*

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**To order, please call
508-758-2844 or email
info@mattapoisetthistoricalsociety.org.**



Financial Report 2018

By Kathleen Damaskos

Financial results for the first eight months of 2018 (January – August) were presented at the annual meeting.

- Operating activity continues to present the challenge of income keeping up with 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 provide funding for special projects, including an estimated two years of archiving and cataloguing work funded in 2017.
- Endowment and investments continue to grow with both contributions and investment returns.

2018 Income and Expense Statement

	Operations	Restricted Grants	Endowment	Total
Income	14,658			14,658
Public Support	10,480			10,480
Earnings from Sales, Admissions and Memberships	4,516			4,516
Events		700		700
Local Government Grants			1,150	1,150
Investment Returns			18,646	18,646
	29,654	700	19,796	50,150
Expense	32,801	8,062	0	40,863
Surplus (Deficit)	-3,147	-7,362	19,796	9,287

2018 Balance Sheet

Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	13,259
Grants Receivable	33,180
Inventories for Sale or Use	6,462
Total Current Assets	52,902
Other Assets	
Maketable Securities	314,940
Total Assets	367,841
Liabilities and Equity	
Equity	
Unrestricted Net Assets	283,669
Temp Restricted Net Assets	33,180
Perm Restricted Net Assets	40,075
Net Income	10,917
Total Liabilities and Equity	367,841

Upcoming Events

Isaac Taylor LIVE in Mattapoissett!

Thursday, November 8

7:00 pm

Isaac Taylor will play live in Mattapoissett on Thursday, November 8 at 7:00 pm at 5 Church Street. The tickets are \$30 each. This concert is in celebration of the Mattapoissett Historical Society's 60th Anniversary. Come listen as Isaac Taylor shares songs from his new album "Peace in the Valley" in our unique, small-venue setting. Isaac's authentic, soulful music and powerful vocals will go straight to your heart. Nephew of James and Livingston, Isaac showcases his own harmonious musicality influenced by the Barr Brothers and Northern Indian classical music. Local band Retro Roots will open for Isaac with their renditions of rock and blues music.



holiday Arts & Craft Fair

Saturday, December 8

1:00 - 4:00 pm

Avoid mall parking lots! Don't get stuck in holiday traffic! Instead join us for our annual *Holiday Arts & Crafts Fair* at 5 Church Street, Mattapoissett on Saturday, December 8, 2018 from 1:00 - 4:00 pm. Shop for unique holiday gifts -- local, one-of-a-kind items. There will be a large selection of handmade creations available: art, notecards, soaps, woolens, photographs, jewelry, wrought iron and more.

For more information call 508-758-2844 or email info@mattapoissetthistoricalsociety.org.



**Mass
Cultural
Council**

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



Curator's Corner by Jeffrey Miller

We had another great summer at the museum, despite the less than stellar weather. It was a lot of work getting our special exhibit ready, and then we went right into preparation for the new Mendell Gallery opening. It wouldn't have been possible without the help of our great Exhibit Committee, as well as our greeters. Thank you all!

Our exhibit this year, *Mattapoissett Movers & Shakers*, was essentially all about interesting people. By focusing on some of the original and noteworthy ideas to come out of Mattapoissett, I think we really highlighted how even small towns have fascinating stories to find. The exhibit also illustrated the diversity of talent in our little town – from basketry to boatbuilding to electrical engineering, people in Mattapoissett have had an impact in many different fields.

Unfortunately, we didn't have space to include every mover and shaker in the exhibit. Here are just a few honorable mentions:



A slate electrical switchboard produced in Mattapoissett by Charles Stetson Mendell, c. 1915 – 1930.

- Dick Young and his father Phil founded and ran the Acushnet Company, which is known for producing the Titleist golf ball. Dick was also a philanthropist and patron to many worthy enterprises in Mattapoissett and beyond.
- Milton Silveira worked for NASA during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. He oversaw development of the Little Joe II launch vehicle and worked on Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and Skylab programs, among other projects.

• Abraham Skidmore owned a barbershop in Mattapoissett for

over 50 years. He was a charismatic town figure and well-known for leading the Halloween parades.

- Elizabeth Stoddard was a poet and novelist, born in Mattapoissett in 1823. Her most popular work was *The Morgesons*, which told the story of Cassandra Morgeson's and her fight to achieve personal independence and economic autonomy in a small New England seaside town.

We also asked visitors to let us know who their movers and shakers were. Here are some of the names, in no particular order:

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.	Ruth and Andrew Oliver	Peter Michael Martin
David Staelin	Mary B.H. Ransom	Robert Parker
Bruce E. Rocha	Charles Rodrigues	Al Morgado
Alexander Hamilton	Brenda Finn	Tom Ward
Willie Mays	Carleton Burr	George Washington
Mudgie Tavares	Alden S. Kinney	

As you can see, a 'Mover & Shaker' can be many different things – from legendary historical figures to artists to local public servants, and everything in between! We hope you enjoyed the exhibit, but if you didn't get a chance, it's not too late. We won't be open for regular hours until next summer, but you can always call or email to make an appointment.



Two rubber toys made in the J.S. Hagen Toy Factory at 34 Barstow Street, run by the Hagen brothers, John and David, c. 1954 – 1964.



A Mattapoissett basket, made by Gladys Ellis, who pioneered the style, for her daughter Carole.



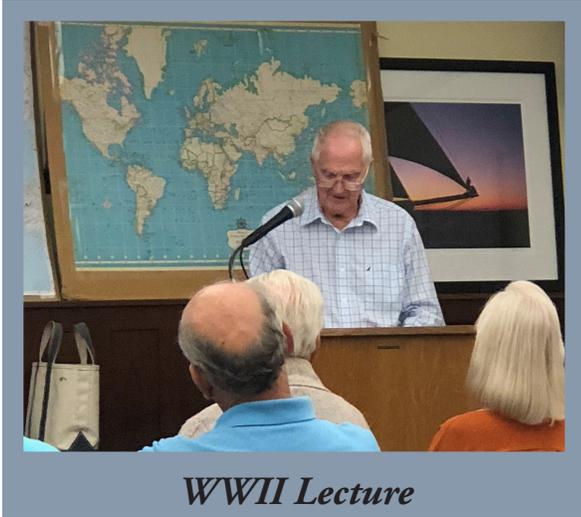
WORD SEARCH
Boston World Series
 by Lisa Hill

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| AMERICANS | WAGNER | CARDINALS | FARRELL |
| BAMBINO | PIRATES | MARTINEZ | ELLSBURY |
| HOOPER | CARRIGAN | DAMON | SALTALAMACCHIA |
| RED SOX | ROBINS | MILLAR | NAPOLI |
| HUNTINGTON AVE | SHORTEN | ORTIZ | BRADLEY |
| FENWAY PARK | BARROW | SCHILLING | |
| STAHL | CUBS | ROCKIES | |
| CARRIGAN | AGNEW | PEDROIA | |



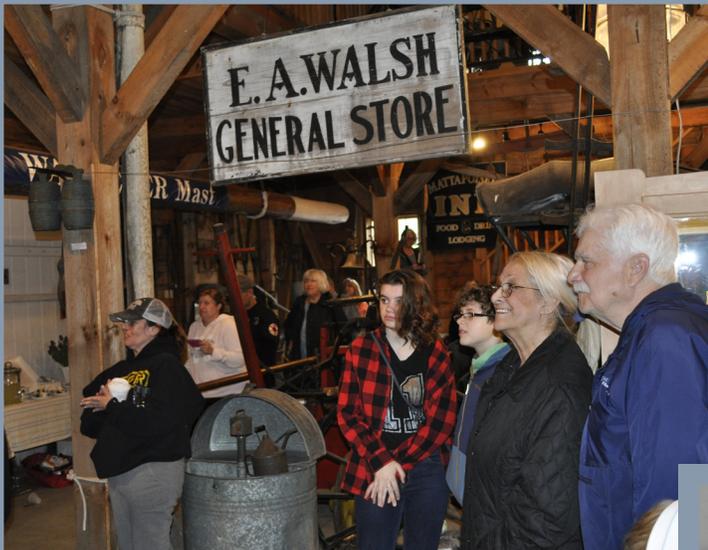
RECENT EVENTS





RECENT EVENTS

Mendell Gallery Opening



60th Anniversary Music Fest





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2018 Annual Appeal

Support the Mattapoissett Museum



A vibrant place of fun and learning for people of all ages.

www.mattapoissetthistoricalsociety.org/support/annual-appeal/