



HISTORICAL Highlights

Cohasset Historical Society • Quarterly Newsletter • Fall 2016

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Historical Highlights

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From the President

Dear Members and Friends,

Since changing the format for *Historical Highlights* and selecting a theme for each issue I am enjoying researching information for my letter. The topic for this issue is the history of Communication in Cohasset from the incorporation of the town in 1770 to the present day. I am not able to keep up with the changes in my lifetime. Luckily there are "techies" at the Society who keep us current with our website and Facebook.

I know that the people at the telephone company in the village were a great source of communication as were the residents who liked to listen in on the party lines. The telephone exchange of Evergreen, current day 383, lives on. I understand that phone numbers beginning with zeros indicate when the telephone was installed. My husband and his brothers were often told "you boys need to hang up that phone."

The Finest Hours certainly made us a hub of communication, Hollywood style. My favorite type of communication at the Pratt Building is when the doorbell sounds and another interesting person seeking or providing information appears. Why not be one of them?

I am also pleased to report that we have welcomed a wonderful addition to our staff. Julia Gleason has joined our team and may well be our best communicator. She brings to the Society her vast experience of 40 years as an independent tour coordinator in New England, with 16 years spent at the Nichols House Museum on Beacon Hill. Her grandparents Emily and Hollis Gleason moved to Cohasset in 1919.

Please keep the Society on your "To Do" list, and stay in touch.

My very best regards,

Kathleen L. O'Malley, *President*

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Mud Slinging Not New to Political Campaigns

Lynne DeGiacamo

As World War I came to a close, the decade of the 1920s ushered in an era of new styles, new money and social and political change. Perhaps the most significant of these occurred in January 1920 when the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution outlawing the use of alcohol for anything but medicinal purposes became effective. Deemed by President Hoover as “The Noble Experiment,” the 18th Amendment was enacted to reduce crime and corruption, solve social problems, reduce the tax burden created by poorhouses and generally improve the quality of American life.

Like many American small towns, Cohasset was not immune to the changes brought about by the 18th Amendment. All along its coastline the sounds of muffled engines and small arms fire could be heard during the dark of night. The Cohasset shore provided a prime location for illicit cargo being smuggled into the country and many Cohasset fishermen took advantage of this opportunity to increase their income. Small boats traveled approximately 15 miles offshore to large rum schooners that had traveled south from Canada or north from Mexico. Once the goods had been transferred, the smaller craft returned to Cohasset discharging their cargo at the foot of Parker Avenue, along Bailey’s

Creek, at Sandy Cove and on various waterfront estates.

As the country adapted to the restrictions of Prohibition, speakeasies came into prominence. The Breaden Cheese Tree Motor Club, located on Forest Avenue, was Cohasset’s most famous speakeasy. Organized in 1914 pursuant to M.G.L. Ch. 125 relating to the organization of corporations for charitable and other purposes, the club provided a venue for picnics, clambakes and other similar gatherings. Participants in the Boston Bicycle Club’s annual “Wheel of the Hub” in 1915 spent part of their second day at a clambake served at the Breaden Cheese Club and in 1919 the Quincy Quartermen’s picnic of lobsters, clams, potatoes and fish also was held there. The event was described in the *Fore River Log* of September 1919, “Tables were set amid the peaceful surrounding of the old apple orchard and a wonderful dinner was served while the orchestra played popular airs.”

By 1922 all had changed, using a favored form of communication during the 1920s, a group of citizens circulated a broadside urging voters to “Protect the Good Name of Cohasset from the evil of the Breaden Cheese Club.” Defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as a strong and harsh

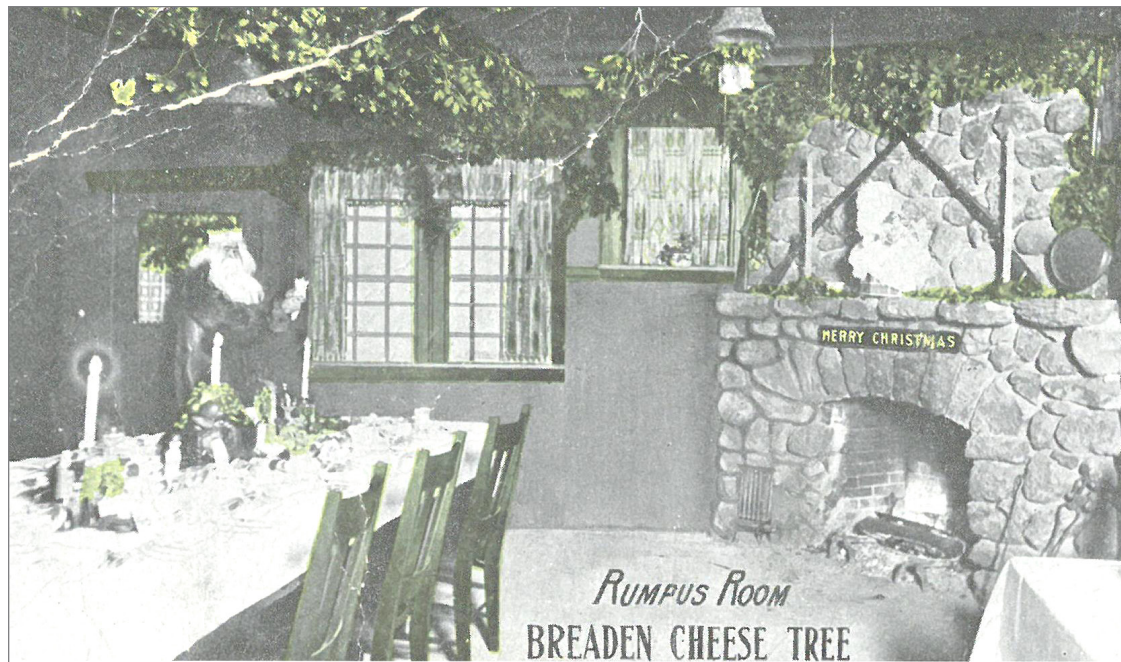
spoken or written attack, a written broadside is a sheet of paper with a printed message usually political in nature that is distributed among voters. The Society is fortunate to have several broadsides in its collection including the 1922 broadside written by five women who supported Eugene N. Tower’s candidacy for selectman against incumbent Harry E. Mapes. The broadside alleged,

We are beset by muck and scruff, from communities around our own, who persist in making COHASSET their carousal ground . . . NO FILTHIER HELLHOLE COULD EXIST anywhere in or around Boston. To harbor such an institution as the Breaden Cheese Club is one thing certain to send COHASSET’S reputation into the depths of inequity and shame. Wild orgies and drunken revels have occurred in this place-operated with the permission of our Board of Selectmen . . . Night after night, and even into the advanced hours of the morning, especially during the summer season, the shrieks of women and the cursing of men were heard in and around Forest Avenue on the property of and adjacent to the Breaden Cheese Club . . . LIQUOR IS FREELY IN EVIDENCE . . . To return the present incumbent to office is to continue the present undesirable conditions . . .

Harry Mapes, not to be outdone, published a broadside of his own, headlined “Cohasset’s Good Name Is Secure.” This was quickly followed up by Eugene Tower’s broadside attacking Mapes’ record as Selectman. The battle of the broadsides continued until Election Day when Mapes easily won re-election.

Breaden Cheese Tree Motor Club postcard c. 1915.

The back of the postcard reads: “Old Fashioned Rock Clambake, baked in Field Stone Fireplace every Friday evening at 6:00.”



Rebecca Bates-McArthur

From the beginning of time, people have found a way to communicate with each other, from the evolution of different languages and dialects to the current day use of electronic means. Many types of communication are connected with the building of the Minot’s Ledge lighthouses.

The first Minot’s Ledge lighthouse was designed by Capt. William Swift of the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers. An “iron pile” structure, it consisted of eight circumferential legs and a central leg, all set into the granite ledge. The lantern house and keeper’s quarters sat atop this frame. It was first lit in January of 1850. Capt. Swift corresponded with Capt. John Wilson, the original owner of the Wilson House, who would ferry him out to the work site. Capt. Swift asked in these letters, “How is it, has there been any injury to the structure during the winter?” questioning the integrity of the lighthouse. On January 11, 1851, Capt. Swift asked, “I would like to know, also, what is really the condition of the Light, is it up, or is it down?” During the gale of April 16, 1851, the lighthouse collapsed. A note placed in a bottle by the two assistant keepers recorded, “The lighthouse wont stand over tonight - she shakes 2 feet each way now.” Capt. Swift’s worst fears had been realized.

When the second Minot’s Ledge lighthouse was built, a means of communication was established between the shore workers and

the men at the lighthouse. On the pinnacle of Beacon Rock, an iron signal tower was erected. It was a quadrupedal frame with a central pole that could be raised or lowered as necessary. Semaphore was used and signal flags would be placed on the central pole and raised to inform the men of weather conditions. A “conservatory” stood just below the summit to monitor the boats and sea conditions. To get to the very top of the rock, the stonecutters had cut a set of stairs. After the lighthouse was lit, Beacon Rock continued as the main means of communication between the shore and lighthouse. Reportedly, this is how the men received the news of the assassination of President Lincoln in 1865. Eventually the telegraph was used for communication. A few years ago, a trail was cleared to the top of Beacon Rock by a local Boy Scout for an Eagle Scout project. The view from the top is amazing.

In 1894, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers invented a new flashing system based on numbers, with a unique flash pattern to distinguish lighthouses from each other. Minot’s was given the characteristic 1-4-3 flash pattern. Only two lights were adapted to this plan but Minot’s has retained its unique signal.

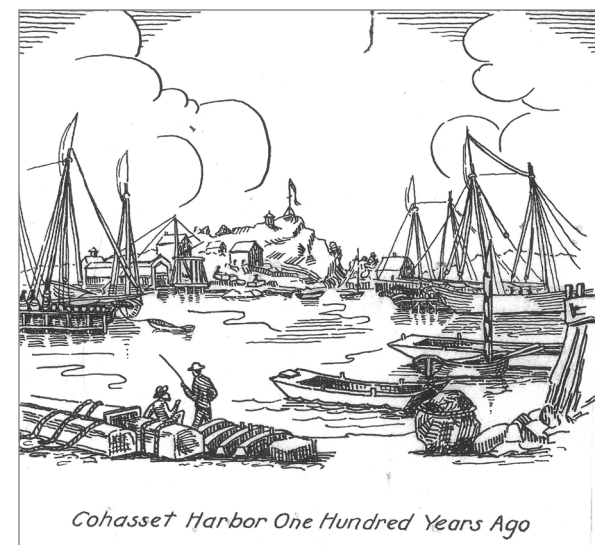
More current examples of communication are the letters and v-mails received in Cohasset from the men and women stationed around

the world during World War II. A letter and a small monetary gift were sent to each person in the military at Christmas time. Letters were received back thanking the homefront for their thoughtfulness. Many thoughts on the war were also received. Major Thomas Churchill, in the 4th Armored Division with General Patton, wrote to the Cohasset American Legion Post in January 1945, “Our Christmas carols had a meek, hollow ring to them . . . a bright winter moon silhouetted our vehicles against the newly fallen snow. . . bright jerry flares were lighting up the far flung landscape. . . When the impersonal battle lull did happen, you just wondered the why’s and wherefore’s of war.”

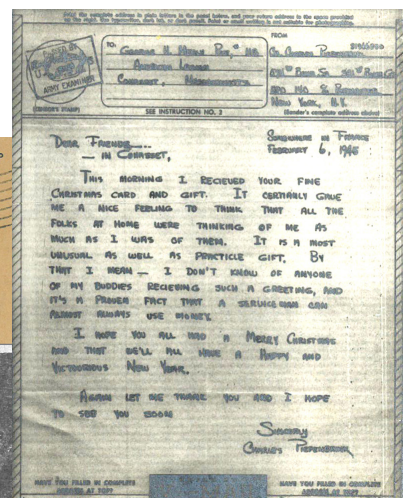
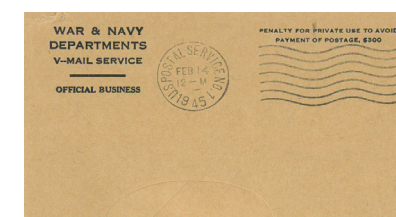
We will always find a way to communicate. Hopefully, it will be recognizable in the future so that historians can learn about the past.

References:

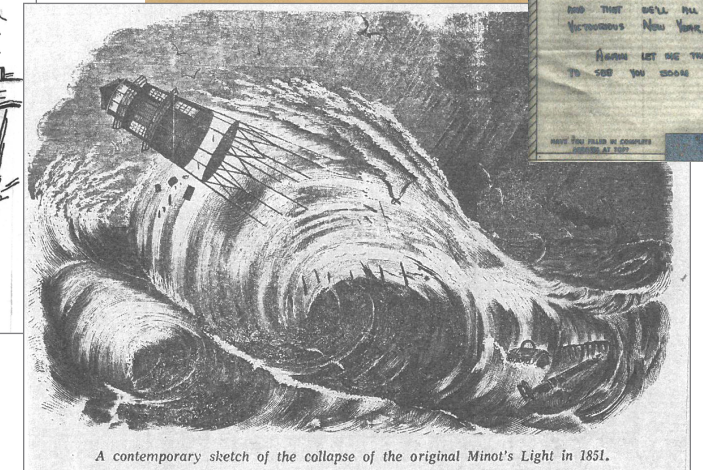
- Papers of Edmund Collier, 1899-1991, Cohasset Society Archives
- David Wadsworth, “A Brief History of Minot’s Ledge Lighthouse,” “Capt. William H. Swift and the Ill-fated First Minot’s Ledge Lighthouse,” “Government Island’s Historic Lands and Buildings,” Cohasset Historical Society



Above: View of Beacon Rock, Cohasset Society Archives
Right: “Destruction of Minot’s Ledge Lighthouse,” wood engraving from Gleason’s Pictorial, May 3, 1851, p. 20. Cohasset Society Archives



Above: V-mail from Charles Piepenbrink (former Cohasset fire chief) to the Cohasset American Legion, February 6, 1945. Cohasset Society Archives



D.S. Kennedy Takes its Place in Cohasset Town History

Lynne DeGiacamo

This article has been taken in part from Nancy White's article, "D.S. Kennedy takes its place in town history," in the *Cohasset Mariner*, September 5, 2008, page 12. Ellipses consisting of three dots indicate when words or sentences or paragraphs were omitted.

[Today], the speed and clarity of long distance communications is largely taken for granted. In a matter of seconds email can be sent around the world and back again, a cell phone call can be made from almost anywhere and international news can be broadcast around the world nearly instantly.

Over the past few decades, communication has evolved drastically. And believe it or not a Cohasset company played an important role in the evolution. D. S. Kennedy Inc. Antenna Equipment made its mark on the development of powerful antennas used for communication and espionage. . .

Despite a relatively short life span of 16 years (1947-1963), D. S. Kennedy was at the forefront of antenna technology for much of its existence and was the largest antenna manufacturer in the world in the 1950s. . .

Founded by a team of local entrepreneurs, Donald S. Kennedy, Warren S. Pratt and Gilman B. Wilder, in 1947, the business got its start at Francis W. Hagerty's "Cohasset Colonials" furniture kit firm. During World War II, Hagerty's company contributed to the war effort by creating antennas and antenna covers ("radomes") to conceal the technology. The radar was installed at the



Above: D. S. Kennedy Annual Report, March 31, 1958



Above: D. S. Kennedy Annual Report, March 31, 1958

bow of PT boats. After the war, Hagerty wanted to go back to focusing on furniture and his four employees set off to start D. S. Kennedy. . .

In its 16-year life, the company set up antennas all over the world and attracted heavy weight customers like General Electric, ITT, Raytheon and General Dynamics. D.S. Kennedy antenna products were used at the start of the Cold War period to warn against aircraft and missile attacks. . .

At one time, Kennedy employed 1,200 local residents ranging from Quincy to Kingston; Kennedy's products reached far and wide. . .

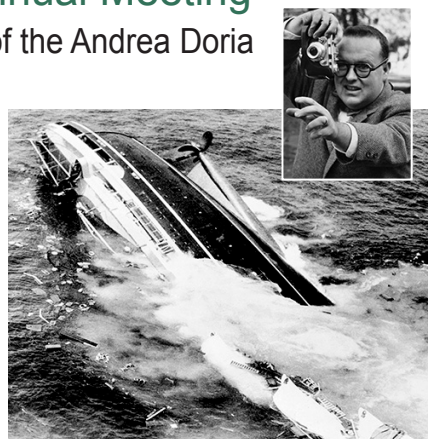
When President John F. Kennedy made a deal with Premier of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, to end the Cuban Missile Crisis, the US part of the deal was to remove two missiles located in Turkey near the Soviet border.

Alongside those missiles was a D. S. Kennedy antenna that was removed as well. . .

2016 Annual Meeting The Loss of the Andrea Doria

Hear Francis Collins, retired Merchant Mariner, tell the whole story on Sunday, October 23. See Calendar on the back page for complete information.

Photograph of the sinking Andrea Doria taken by Cohasset resident Harry Trask in July 1956. Harry won the Pulitzer Prize in Photojournalism in 1957. Harry with his Nikon S2.



Jim McLaughlin



We are sorry to report the loss of our friend and former treasurer, Jim McLaughlin. Jim was our treasurer from 2002 until 2012.

Jim brought his financial expertise, having been a CPA for many years with incredible credentials. He did so with grace and humor. He and Mary supported the Society in every way; Mary promises to carry on.

Diary of Drusilla Snow Percival 1857-1858



Captain John Peter Turner Percival and his wife Drusilla Snow Percival lived in Cohasset on South Main Street. Starting on October 7, 1857, Drusilla and two of her children accompanied Captain Percival on a voyage to Constantinople during which she kept a diary of their experiences. This is the thirty-fifth installment of her diary, written while crossing the Atlantic on the bark Vesta and on the Pathfinder during the return journey. (Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling are as they appear in the diary.)

Saturday, June 5th, 1858

Pleasant this morning it rained last night, and has been moderate all night, and is now some appearance of a change of wind, we hope so at least for without we have a fair wind soon we shall have a long voyage.

This afternoon we have a light breeze from SWest which favors us but there is not so much of it. Capt Kallock and all hands are engaged in painting.

I heard Lilla say for the first time to day that she wanted to go home.

Sunday, June 6th, 1858

We have a fresh breeze from SWest this morning and through the night we have another pleasant day, we have a fair wind and we are all in fine spirits, though a long distance from home yet, we are between the Western Islands and the Grand Bank. The Sec'd Mate has just thrown the Log and she is walking off at a rate of 10-1/2 knots an hour.

The breeze has moderated this afternoon and changed to west which is a head wind.

Monday, June 7th, 1858

Today we have a head wind blowing a good breeze it is cloudy and last night it rained very hard showers we cannot head our course to day.

This afternoon saw a vessel bound East it moderates towards night again with signs of rain wind is WNWest

Tuesday, June 8th, 1858

This day is quite pleasant as the preceeding was. The wind in NNWest yet and no appearance of a change we cannot head our course within 3 or 4 points it is blowing a fresh breeze.

There is no change this afternoon we have a fresh breeze and we head SWest.

The wind favors us a little tonight we are heading West.

Wednesday, June 9th, 1858

The wind is NNWest again this morning, a very lovely day a fresh breeze if we were only on our course we should have made great progress towards N York.

After tea this Eve we saw a humpback whale, which came near the vessel, he was bound East, and we soon lost sight of him, this is the first time one has passed so near in daytime, we are all well and a fair wind is all we want now.

Thursday, June 10th, 1858

There is no change in the wind or weather with the exception of its being a little cloudy and more moderate we gain a little every day towards home but it is trifling compared to the distance we should make with the wind in any other direction.

Wind and weather remains the same it is a perfect day quite warm and not so much breeze as we have had.

Friday, June 11th, 1858

Another pleasant day wind last night at 10 o'clock it was very moderate tacked ship the wind favored us a little, but this morning it is, dead ahead, we are heading North.

Last night at dark we were 500 miles from the Grand Bank and 1500 from N York



In the next installment, more bad weather characterizes the Pathfinder's approach to the Grand Banks on the journey toward New York; there is even a sighting of an iceberg.

Image source: Laying the Atlantic Telegraph cable in 1858. A whale crosses the line. Illustration by Robert Dudley IET Archives ref. NAEST 045/120.

Map: Encyclopedia Britannica 2012

MEMBER PROFILE: Judith Tilden Sestito

Paula Morse



Judy Tilden Sestito, a board member since 2010, was the ideal subject for this issue's Profile. Not only is she a descendent of William A. W. Tilden who was born in Cohasset in 1813, but she has firsthand knowledge of one of the town's more colorful eras in communication.

While still at Cohasset High School in the early 1950s, she worked nights and weekends at the telephone exchange at 9 Depot Court. Like thousands of other young women around the country, Judy found her first job fun and exciting, especially as some of her friends and neighbors worked there as well.

The phone exchange was located in the Tilden Block on Main Street, above the post office on the second floor in the back. Women worked all the shifts except the late one from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Until Direct Dial calling and rotary phones came to Cohasset in 1957, as many as four and sometimes eight operators at a time directed calls at two manual switchboards. This required strong communication skills and a large dose of discretion since they could listen in on conversations, and often knew many of the families whose calls they took – and emergencies they handled. Judy found that most Cohasset residents



Above: Mary Sweeney and Judy Tilden (right), December 1957
Below: Judy's colleague, Louise Conroy, December 1957

were congenial when placing their calls, with some pausing to chat with the operators. It was the rare few who would complain about a slow response time.

"Long distance calls," any call originating from or going to an area outside of Cohasset, would be handled by a single operator at a separate board known as the "B" Board. Local calls were handled by several operators at a large board.

While Judy has many anecdotes about her time as a Cohasset telephone operator, one in particular stands out in her memory.

A severe snow storm in March 1956 blanketed the area preventing travel and people from leaving their homes to go to work. The Cohasset telephone operators worked around the clock, with the exchange putting them up overnight at the Red Lion Inn. Knowing that as many operators as possible were needed, Judy walked to the telephone office from her home on Pleasant Street and offered to help. Her assistance was gratefully accepted and she and the other women operators continued to work the boards for several days as the town went about its post-storm cleanup.

Judy continued at the exchange until the exchange "went dial" in 1957.

Special Thanks

- Donation from Sharon Brennan and Gina Hallick for the framing of the MacIver Reddie painting, *Coastline*, in memory of their parents Geraldine and Hugh McEwan.
- Donation from the Cohasset High School Class of 1966. As part of their reunion weekend they had a cocktail party at the Pratt Building. There were many stories about when it was the library; not all were homework related.
- Donations in memory of Genevieve Good: Maureen and Decker Adams, Eleanor Bleakie, Kathy O'Malley, Lucille Hornby, Elizabeth McLoughlin, Maurice McLoughlin and Paul McLoughlin.
- Janice Crowley of Coastal Countryside Properties for finding our new tenant.
- An anonymous donor for the funding of an internship to gather and sort the digital photographs in the Society's collection and enter them into PastPerfect.
- Barbara Dillon, on behalf of the Community Garden Club of Cohasset (CGCC), has been in charge of maintaining the gardens at the Pratt Building for several years. We welcome the new chairperson Eric Eisenhauer who has begun with total commitment.
- We continue to be grateful for the incredible work that is done by the Cohasset Garden Club at the museums and the CGCC at the Pratt Building.



New Note Cards

Our newest addition to the gift shop is most definitely in the spirit of communication. Earlier this year, a kindergarten class from the Joseph Osgood School visited us to learn about town history. As a way to thank Lynne and the staff, all the kids sent notes to the Society. Each note had a child's drawing of the Pratt Building on the front. Board member Debbie Jenks thought it would be great to take a few of the notes and turn them into note cards for the gift shop. The cards come in packages with six designs. Above are two adorable examples.

Come in and take a look at our selection of items for sale, or visit the gift shop online at CohassetHistoricalSociety.org/gift-shop

New Members

Patricia Frederickson
Michele and Michael Hubley
Michael Hynes and Louisa Kasdon
Sara Meehan

The Society Notes with Sadness the Passing of

Mary A. Casey
Carole Anne Dean
Genevieve Good
Jim McLaughlin
Jacqueline C. Whipple

Barbara Chase
Ann Fitzgerald
Peggy Hassan
Stuart Sargent

Wish List

- \$450 to frame MacIvor Reddie's Captain John Smith watercolor
- \$310 for a machine to convert our extensive video collection to a digital format
- \$415 to print photographs of the Cohasset Horse Show, c. 1930 from existing glass slides

2015 Annual Appeal Update

With sincere apologies for an error in the 2015 Annual Appeal Update. *The donation by Virginia Gray was made in memory of her parents Adelaide and William Brown.*

2016 Annual Fundraiser: Clambake

The Society held its third Clambake Fundraiser in recent years on Saturday, September 10. The event was the concept of long-time supporter and board member, Eleanor Bleakie. Her vision for a lovely evening on Sandy Beach with traditional New England clambake fare and live music was first brought to life by a dedicated committee in September of 2013. A second clambake took place at the same venue the following September and was equally as wonderful, except for some stormy weather that blew in a bit too early in the evening. After that the Society decided to change the event to every other year, so this time after two years of anticipation, our biennial Clambake proved to be yet another huge success, and it is very safe to say a good time was had by all!

Please mark your calendars for the first Saturday after Labor Day in 2018 for the next chance to experience a special dinner on the beach.

Here are just a few of the images taken by An LeFevre of AnOriginal Photography in Cohasset.



Calendar of Events

LECTURE SERIES

October 12, Wednesday

7:00 p.m. Light refreshments
7:30 p.m. Speaker: David Noonan
Topic: *Scituate Art Colony*
Pratt Building

October 23, Sunday

2016 Annual Meeting

5:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Meeting and Dinner
Cost: \$35 members; \$37 non-members
Speaker: Francis Collins, retired Merchant Mariner
Topic: *The Loss of the Andrea Doria*
Bancroft Hall - Government Island
Limited seating

November 16, Wednesday

7:00 p.m. Light refreshments
7:30 p.m. Speaker: Eric Eisenhauer
Topic: *The history of roses and other botanical subjects*
Pratt Building

OPEN HOURS

Pratt Building • 106 South Main Street
Monday- Friday • 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

1810 Captain John Wilson House and c.1760 Maritime Museum are closed for the season.
They will reopen in June 2017.

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FALL 2016

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