

The newly restored 1849 hand tub pumper, Independence



HISTORICAL Highlights

Cohasset Historical Society Newsletter • Fall-Winter 2018

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From the President

Dear Members and Friends,



It was a very good year. Ninety years of rich history of the Cohasset Historical Society concluded with the 2018 Annual Meeting. This year the meeting was held at the Beechwood Meetinghouse and Museum.

On day one, July 16, 1928, the society began to tell its story. That meeting was held at the residence of Dr. Oliver H. Howe on North Main Street. Three original categories of membership were established. Annual, Sustaining and Life. Dues of one dollar, five dollars and fifty dollars. 114 names were voted upon affirmatively by the directors who accepted them as members. Many of those names are recognizable today. Bates, Bigelow, Brown, Furber, Gammons, Howe, Hyde, James, May, Maynard, McGaw, Nichols, Peterson, Pratt, Souther, Stevens, St. John, Stoddard, Sylvester, Tilden, Tower, and Willcutt. From the beginning the society partnered with Hingham and Scituate. Wonderful partnerships that continue.

As we look forward, we will continue to promote the purposes for which the society was formed: "To develop interest in the history of Cohasset and to preserve information, documents, relics and landmarks relating to the history of the Town."

We are the stewards of four magnificent buildings, three of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The number of items in our collection continue to grow and colorfully document the history of Cohasset and the people who made and continue to make it the wonderful place that it is today.

I look forward to continuing on the history voyage with you.

My very best regards,

Kathleen L. O'Malley, President

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Julia H. Gleason

One particularly notable resident of Cohasset that passed away in the year the Society was founded, was Clarence W. Barron, owner of the mansion known as The Oaks, at 49 Margin Street, who made his fortune as a pioneer in the world of financial journalism. He was a co-founder and president of Dow-Jones and presided over The Wall Street Journal and Barron's Financial Weekly. But when interviewed in 1927, a year before his death, he declared himself a dairy farmer first, then a financial publisher.

Dairy farming was a popular pastime among wealthy East Coast gentlemen in the early 20th century, but for Barron the farm was more than just a hobby. He was passionate about milk and believed that certified milk was not only essential to the health and wellbeing of infants, but also could save their lives. In the early 1900s Barron bought 465 acres of land and established Oaks Farm. The property, known as Deer Hill, included both sides of today's Sohier Street. A small portion of the farm extended north to Turkey Hill, now a Trustees of Reservations property. Rte 3A would cut through the top of the farm in the 1930s.

For all of his good intentions, however, Barron knew nothing about dairy farming. He didn't care about making a profit but he wanted to produce the highest quality milk. In 1912, he hired Walter Kerr, an experienced dairyman to manage the farm and build up the stock. After the end of World War I, Barron sent Kerr to the Channel Islands of Guernsey and Alderney on a regular basis to choose the finest cattle for importation and breeding. By the 1920s, Barron had a herd of 200 cattle, 180 Guernseys and 20 Ayrshires, making Oaks Farm one of the largest dairies in New England.

Guernseys are prized for the high butterfat content of their milk. The value of a cow is based on how many pounds of butterfat she produces per year. A bull is judged by his fertility and ability to father cows with high butterfat milk. Ayrshires, from Scotland, have a slightly lower butterfat content thus making their milk more easily digestible, perfect for babies.

Oaks Farm was basically self-sufficient with the exception of hay brought in

from Canada and New York. Sixty acres of corn and 60 acres of wheat fed the cattle and the horses, water came from the nearby reservoir. There were six large barns: room for 40 cows in each of the milking barns, a bull barn and a calf barn, nine large silos and some 20 other structures "including the creamery, an office building, two ice houses, carpenter shop, a rooming house, a boarding house, horse barn, several homes for married workers ... and other smaller barns and outbuildings." They were attractive and constructed of fieldstone and shingles. The manager's office, which was converted to a residence (206 Sohier Street), is the only remaining building.

Oaks Farm produced only certified milk, which required strict standards of cleanliness. Before each milking the milkers put on clean uniforms, and the tails and udders of the cows were washed and dried. All milking was done by hand. The milk was tested for bacteria content every week, and both cows and milkers were given routine physicals. Ice harvested from Lily Pond provided refrigeration.

Famous visitors included John Kellogg, of Battle Creek cereal fame, and President Calvin Coolidge (Barron was his financial advisor). Kellogg was a friend of Barron's and shared his opinion that milk was the ideal source of nourishment. He is best known today as the inventor of Corn Flakes, a perfect breakfast when served with milk. When Coolidge summered in Swampscott in 1925, Oaks Farm supplied the dairy products for the presidential household. Coolidge toured the farm when Barron hosted his visit to Cohasset.

When Barron died his land passed to his descendants, the Bancrofts. Oaks Farm remained in business on a much smaller scale, for another twenty years. The Oaks Farm was the last active dairy farm in Cohasset. In the 1930s part of the site became the Cohasset Horse Show grounds. The South Shore Music Circus and the Osgood and Deer Hill Schools now occupy this part of the farm, and some of the land became the development that started with Old Pasture Road. One can still find Oaks Farm milk bottles in the woods here. On the other side of Sohier Street developers in the early 1960s created Fairoaks Lane.



Clarence Barron, Boston Post, July 26, 1925.



Dairy Workers pose at Oaks Farm on Sohier Street

Julia H. Gleason



Hector Pelletier in Cohasset Village circa 1950

Hector Pelletier was a young State Police Trooper stationed at the Norwell barracks when he was assigned to work the Sunday summer traffic detail for Cohasset in 1926. His "quiet efficiency" so impressed the selectmen that he was their first choice to replace Chief William McArthur who announced his resignation that same year. After agreeing to try it for six months, Pelletier officially became chief in April of 1927; he stayed on for 40 years.

Pelletier began by reorganizing the police force: designating a sergeant, three patrolmen and a unit of special police who would undergo extensive training. Because he took over during Prohibition, Pelletier wanted to make sure that his men were familiar with every nook and cove of Cohasset. Roving patrols provided coverage during the night and the station was now manned 24 hours a day with a blue light in front. The village was fitted out with designated parking spaces and crosswalks and a storeroom in the station was converted to an emergency room and lockers installed. Provisions also were made for more accurate record keeping. This was just a start. Pelletier was the first chief to submit an annual report to the town in which he always praised his men and the law-abiding citizens of Cohasset.

The safety and well-being of the young people in town was of great concern to Pelletier. Aside from the rhyme, this may be one of the reasons that he came to be called Hector the Protector. He believed that teens in trouble were better served by guidance and understanding than by the letter of the law. On Saturday mornings, the chief met with any and all who needed help. Sometimes a conversation was enough, other times Pelletier took stronger measures: driver's licenses were

handed over for however long he deemed appropriate, chores were assigned at the station included sweeping, mopping and washing the cruisers, for some mandatory attendance at Sunday church services.

Hector Pelletier retired in 1967 after having served in what he called the most beautiful town with the finest people in America.

To see a selection of photos and artifacts from Chief Pelletier's service in Cohasset, visit the Beechwood Meetinghouse and Museum.

Please share your memories of Hector Pelletier. You may write to us or e-mail cohassethistory@yahoo.com.

1928 Police Report

Arrest Report		
	Male	Female Total
Accessory after the fact to murder	1	1 2
Assault and battery		3 3
Attempted larceny	1	1
Bastardy	3	3
Committed to insane hospital	2	1 3
Delinquent child	2	2
Drunk	25	25
Failing to stop after causing injury to property	1	1
Fugitive from justice	2	2
Interfering with lobster traps	2	2
Illegal sale of liquor	2	2
Keeping and exposing liquor for sale	1	1
Larceny	13	13
Larceny by check		1 1
Murder	4	4
Neglect of family	6	6
No rear light	1	1
Operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of intoxicating liquor	8	8
Operating a motor vehicle without license	3	3
Operating uninsured automobile	1	1
Operating unregistered automobile	1	1
Operating automobile in a negligent manner so that the lives and safety of the public might be endangered	2	1 3
Peddling without license	2	2
Rape	2	2
Receiving stolen property	3	3
Suspicious person	1	1
Trespass	1	1
Violation of parole	1	1
Violation of probation	1	1
Total	92	7 99

2018 Annual Meeting

The 2018 Annual Meeting of the Society was held on Sunday, October 28th at our newest treasure, the Beechwood Meetinghouse and Museum.

At the conclusion of the meeting, our Guest Speaker, Andy Swift, entertained and educated us about his career and passion for the fire engine restoration. Andy is the owner of Firefly Restoration Co. located in Hope, Maine. That is where our two hand tub pumpers were restored.

A reception followed in the newly created museum where the pumpers are now at home along with many items in our collection pertaining to the history of the Fire and Police Departments and the Beechwood neighborhood. He explained how these pumpers were used to fight fires.

A very enthusiastic group of members were present.



Attendees at the Annual Meeting seated in the sanctuary of the old Beechwood Congregational Church. The room is now a wonderful place to hold meetings and events of all kinds.



Glenn Pratt and Lily Sestito attend the arrival of the pumpers to their new permanent home.



Volunteer of the year, Annette Sawchuk



Society members, Jean Hajar, Mindy Evans, Lucille Hornsby and Anne O'Malley



Member Wayne Sawchuk and Andy Swift of Firefly Restoration in Hope, Maine, the outfit that restored our treasured pumpers.



Weather vane from the Old Beechwood Fire House. The Society is using the image of the shadow that it casts as the logo for the Beechwood Meetinghouse and Museum



Konnohasset Hand Tub Pumper

Exhibit: Margaret Hall's World War I Diary and Photographs

Deborah Jenks

This November, in recognition of the 100th Anniversary of the end of World War I, we presented an exhibit containing Margaret Hall's diary and remarkable photographs taken during her stint with the American Red Cross at the battlefield in France from August 1918 through August 1919. Some of you may have seen the Society's 2005 exhibit, *From the Battle Ground 1918-1919: The Journals of Margaret Hall*; the exhibit included the never-before-seen Hall journals, photographs, war documents and artifacts. The diary, one of four versions she produced, and the photographs were donated to the Society in by her chauffeur Pierce Butler.

Margaret Hall was from a wealthy Boston family, a Bryn Mawr graduate and suffrage activist, one of many such women who exchanged comfortable lives for the rigors of service at the western front. In August 1918 she and other volunteers boarded one of two transport ships bound for France; police, medical and customs inspectors all failed to ask if she was carrying a

camera, so hers was not confiscated as it should have been. On this dangerous journey the transports were part of a 23-ship convoy (battleships, destroyers, submarine chasers).

"Soon after we left the harbor, we were in war form. Guns pointed outward, lifeboats swung out, ladders ready. In two hours the zigzagging [to avoid enemy submarines] began which we are to keep up most of the way across" the Atlantic. And the danger did not let up until armistice on November 11, 1918.

Once in France, Hall requested and was eventually granted an assignment with the Red Cross canteen in Châlons-sur-Marne (now Châlons-en-Champagne) at the end of September. Châlons, as she refers to the town, was near the city of Reims at the battlefield in northwestern France; it had suffered a great deal: "in some parts, nothing but ruins are to be seen."

Canteen work was exhausting - providing food (preparing and serving), cigarettes, coffee, chocolate and the like to a constant stream of prisoners,

refugees and troops from all over Europe, America and Africa fighting at the German lines - soldiers heading to the battle zone, some on brief leave, and the wounded being transported to hospital. Her diary recounts the daily sounds of nearby guns, bombing raids, and both German and French planes overhead.

After the armistice, the workload at the canteen was perhaps even more intense than before because of the demands of vast numbers of destitute and starving allied prisoners of war and refugees returning home, not to mention the thousands of troops en route to Germany.

But Hall managed several road trips through the northern French countryside to observe, chronicle and photograph the trenches, "battlefields and ruined towns." They went to Reims, Verdun, the Argonne, Château Thierry, Sedan, Fort Douaumont, and many other locations. In the winter, "we drove right through the Champagne battlefields, where the Germans had their lines and

trenches for four years...; through little towns so flat that in broad daylight I had to be told I was going through a town..."Near Douaumont, "we drove...through those barren, desolate, gray hills, all shot to pieces, without a tree or a living thing anywhere for miles and miles."

They returned to the Argonne the following spring, visiting the forts at Vaux and Douaumont where "the battlefield was covered with violets, great, big wonderful ones, and the larks were singing high up I the sky, but the dead were everywhere in our path." Hall characterized these excursions as a "nervous business ... and by the time I land in Châlons, am much more of a wreck than when I started out. But why be here in the midst of it and not see it, even if it kills you in the end!"

Excerpts from earlier article by Deborah Jenks



As U. S. mail gets more and more expensive, we, along with other non-profit organizations, are turning to email correspondence for routine notifications. Do we have an email address for you? Has your email changed recently? We want to keep our members up to date about programs and events that occur between newsletters through email and Constant Contact. Send your updated information to cohassethistory@yahoo.com



Beechwood Meetinghouse and Museum



The Fire and Police Museum, as well as the upstairs meeting hall, will be open for group tours and events through appointment.

Please call the Society at 781-383-1434.

SHOP LOCAL

Visit our Gift Shop this Holiday Season



Need a special surprise, stocking stuffer, or a hostess gift for that Cohasset lover on your list?

Visit us at our Pratt Building Headquarters at 106 South Main Street. We are open weekdays from 10 - 4.

The Beach Glass Candy (above right) will also be available after the holidays!



Pop-up gift shop at the museum's open house on December 2nd



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Name(s) _____

Address _____

City | State | Zip _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

MEMBERSHIP TYPE *(please check one)*

New Membership Renewal

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES *(please check one)*

Individual \$25 Family \$35 Sustaining \$50 Contributing \$100 Business \$150
 Patron \$500 Benefactor \$1,000

Please mail this form and your check payable to *Cohasset Historical Society* to: Cohasset Historical Society, PO Box 627, Cohasset, MA 02025

OPEN HOURS Pratt Building • 106 South Main Street • Monday- Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
1810 Captain John Wilson House is closed for the season. The ca. 1754 Maritime Museum is closed for restoration.