



# HISTORICAL Highlights

Cohasset Historical Society • Quarterly Newsletter • Winter 2016

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## From the President

Dear Members and Friends,

The new format for *Historical Highlights* is receiving rave reviews. The look is quite different but we wanted to make sure that the topics remain consistent, especially for those who follow the travels of Drusilla. There are more episodes to come.

In this edition of the newsletter I would like to focus on the importance of volunteers. Volunteers are crucial to any organization, especially ours, which has a part-time staff of three. Volunteers extend the resources and provide extra help for tasks and activities that might not otherwise get done. Members join for different reasons: some to support the events and programs and others to become more involved.

A list of Volunteer Opportunities is included on page 7. If there is something that interests you or if you have skills that you would like to share, please get in touch with me. A day at the Pratt Building is amazing. Consider being a part of the history that we are making.

A Facebook friend of mine posted a sign that said, "Do it for the cause, not the applause." Sounds like the perfect volunteer mindset. We are such a good cause and more often than not we do get applause.

On Sunday, April 10th we will be having a Volunteer Appreciation Reception at the Pratt Building, celebrating the beginning of National Volunteer Week, April 10th through April 16th. I hope that all of you who are reading this will be on the invitation list.

Enjoy the rest of the winter and know that the Pratt Building is a welcoming place to spend some time.

My very best regards,

Kathleen L. O'Malley, *President*

## Historical Highlights

For information on membership and programs, please visit our website [www.CohassetHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.CohassetHistoricalSociety.org)

or contact us

781-383-1434

PO Box 627, Cohasset, MA 02025  
[CohassetHistory@yahoo.com](mailto:CohassetHistory@yahoo.com)

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## The Finest Hours Comes to Cohasset

In November of 2014, Disney filmed parts of the movie *The Finest Hours* in Cohasset and temporarily transformed our headquarters into the Cape Cod Bell Telephone Company, circa 1950.



Vintage switchboards were brought in to complete the transformation of the Society's headquarters into the Cape Cod Bell Telephone Company, circa 1952.

*The Finest Hours* is based on a book of the same name written by two Massachusetts natives, Casey Sherman and Michael Tougas. It tells the story of a daring and almost unbelievable real life Coast Guard rescue off the coast of Cape Cod in 1952.

The movie stars Casey Affleck, Chris Pine and Holliday Grainger and opened on January 29<sup>th</sup> in theaters in 42 countries. Find it in a theater near you, and see if you recognize some places around Cohasset, the South Shore and Cape Cod, where filming took place.



The crew takes a break while filming *The Finest Hours*. Artificial snow has been sprayed on the whole scene.



Actress Holliday Grainger on the steps of the Pratt Building

Exterior photography courtesy of Disney Productions

## Glacial Rocks and Other Stones

Rebecca Bates-McArthur

“The town of Cohasset has many beautiful specimens of the great glacier’s work.”

(E. Victor Bigelow, *Narrative History of Cohasset*, vol. 1, p. 53)

Whitney Woods, owned by the Trustees of Public Reservations since 1933, was once owned by Henry Whitney, as a private estate for equestrian pursuits. Many interesting glacial boulders can be found here. Bigelow Boulder, balanced on a ledge at the side of Boulder Lane, is 15 ft. in diameter. Rooster Rock, with a “cockscomb” profile, is balanced 5-6 ft. high atop a smaller stone, which rests on another large boulder. South of Howe Road there is a group of six large boulders and many smaller ones. One group has a cave beneath it large enough for someone to sleep in. This is called Ode’s Den because Odin Pritchard, after the death of his second wife, left behind the more densely populated part of town and took up residency in the cave. He remained there until, during the winter, he failed to appear for supplies. His body was found near the cave.

Further into the woods is Burbank Boulder. In 1941 the federal government took a portion of the tract along the southern side for an ammunition depot. The land southwest of the tract was given a separate name of Thayer Woods, after Mrs. Ezra Thayer, in recognition of her gift of beautiful woodland. The main entrance to Whitney Woods is opposite the end of Sohier Street on Route 3A. The other entrance is at the base of Turkey Hill on the Cohasset-Hingham line. A map of the area can be downloaded from the Trustees of Reservations website, at [www.thetrustees.org](http://www.thetrustees.org).



Tippling Rock, Cohasset Historical Society Archives

Wheelwright Park on North Main Street has more interesting geological features. The property was given to the town in 1916 under bequests from Edward Wheelwright, his wife, Isaphene, and his brother, Henry A. Wheelwright. They were descendants of one of Cohasset’s earliest families and had a spacious summer home off Jerusalem Road. Geological features include Devil’s Chair, a “pothole” dug into rock, and Little Tippling Rock, a glacial erratic. Big Tippling is a large glacial erratic, about 12 ft. high and 20 ft. long, and rests on a few inches of ledge. These are located along the dirt road that goes through the park. During the depression, fireplaces and a skating pond were built by the WPA. This park is a wonderful place to explore. Copies of the map of the park may be found at the Town Clerk’s office.

Also found in Cohasset are granite quarries. The better known one is the quarry which now lies underwater at the Cohasset reservoir. In the early 1900s a deposit of pink granite was found on the northerly side of Beechwood Street; this was owned by the Shaw Granite Quarry of Quincy. Most of the granite went to Quincy where it was made into monuments and foundations. The capstones on a retaining wall at the Pratt Building came from this quarry. Granite balls were made by the quarry makers and are still treasured possessions here in Cohasset. The Tiffanys of New York bought the property and Louis Tiffany and others quarried some stone in a small way for several years. The land became part of the ammunition depot during World War II.

Another quarry was located at Quarry Point at Hobart/Lothrop Lane. Resident Lucy



Map of Quarry Point, from Cohasset Chamber of Commerce, 2009

E. Treat (1884-1969), in her article, “The Storied Rocks of Cohasset,” (*Cohasset Historical Society Archives*) wrote, “about the year 1840, a lucrative business in stone cutting was being carried on. Men were busy cutting out huge blocks of granite and loading them by means of a derrick on to a box car, which was then hauled by oxen down the railway across the rocks to the water’s edge. By means of a derrick the blocks were raised to the decks of large sloops, called the stone fleet, which came down each week from Boston, for a load of stone.”

An interesting rock can be seen west of Black Rock Beach but is accessible only during low tide. Called the Jerusalem Road Rock, it is near the location of the Black Rock House. On property owned by Captain Nathaniel Nichols, letters and other inscriptions were cut into a stone in 1822, 1826, and 1828 by his grandson, Nathaniel Nichols Bates. There are his initials, his brothers and sisters, and the initials’ of a cousin, various other friends, and chums. An American eagle was added in 1828. The rock is 6 1/2 ft. by 3 - 3 1/2 ft. and 18 in. thick. Edward Rowe Snow wrote about the stone in 1964, “What idea actuated the young man, to take a hammer and a sharp steel ‘Point’ and cut those letters? Just pride of accomplishment probably. The smooth surface, flat, like a table top, and accessible for working upon, probably had struck him as being interesting. It used to be common practice for boys to initial ledges.” (*Jerusalem Road Stone - Cohasset Stone, Quincy Patriot Ledger, Feb. 25, 1964*)

These are some of the interesting places to visit in Cohasset. It is important to help preserve these sites for all to enjoy. If there are any people, places or things relating to Cohasset’s history that you would like to learn more about, please let us know. This newsletter is a way to inform and educate you about our wonderful town.



Jerusalem Road Stone, photograph by Gael Daly, 2014

## Cohasset Winter Trivia

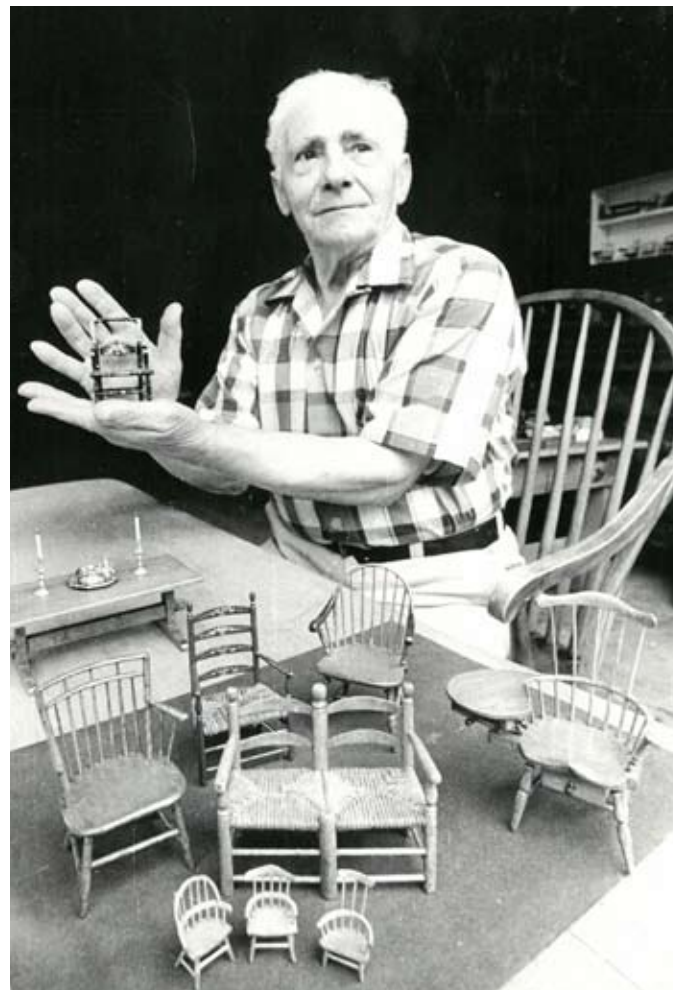
**These highlighted events were taken from a list compiled by the Society’s former historian David Wadsworth and former board member Valerie Lipsett. Their legacies live on.**

- 3/7/1714-15 Inhabitants of Cohasset proposed at Hingham Town Meeting that they “desired the town that they would be pleased to give their consent that they might be made a precinct.”
- 3/19/1753 A committee was appointed to present a plea for separation from Hingham to the General Court in Boston.
- 3/4/1776 Cohasset Militia company under Lieut. Obadiah Beal marched to Dorchester to serve with Gen. Washington’s forces at Dorchester Heights.
- 2/12/1793 Danish sailing ship *Gertrude Maria* (Capt. Hans Peter Clein) wrecked on Brush Island. King Christian of Denmark presents lifesaving awards to Cohasset men for heroism in rescuing.
- 2/22/1815 Cohasset celebrated the end of the War of 1812 and the birthday of “the immortal Washington” with cannons, speeches and bells and a “splendid ball” in the evening.
- 4/12/1827 Town Meeting voted to choose a committee to purchase an almshouse for the accommodation of the poor. This was located on King Street.

- 1/1/1849 Celebration of the opening of the new South Shore Railroad.
- 1/19/1857 Bark *New Empire* wrecked at Whitehead. The crew was saved. Peter Falcon received a silver medal and seven others received bronze medals for lifesaving efforts.
- 1/6/1858 Ship *Serampore* wrecked at Pleasant Beach.
- 1/16/1865 Brig *Dawn of Day* from St. John, NB struck Shepard’s Ledge, then another ledge in Sandy Cove with cargo of salt. The crew was saved.
- 3/12/1887 Town Meeting voted “that the Poor of the Town (the paupers) be put out for a year by the week to those persons that will keep them cheapest.”
- 2/11/1889 Minot’s Ledge Portuguese Benevolent Association held its first official meeting. This was a fraternal and social organization for Azorean families in Cohasset.
- 1/19/1931 Future Town Historian David Wadsworth was born during a snowstorm at Cohasset private hospital.
- 1/1/1970 Opening of the year-long celebration for Cohasset’s Bicentennial of the separation of Cohasset from Hingham. New town flag raised on the Common flagpole.

## From the Collections

Lynne DeGiacomo



For many years after his retirement as a cabinetmaker, Carlo Conte lived on Sohler Street quietly creating marvelous miniature furniture, intricately hand-carved exact copies of Early American antiques. His Windsor chairs, deacons' benches, bureaus, highboys and more were eagerly sought after by collectors. Pieces were made to scale; typically, chairs were 3" and 4" high and highboys, 5¼." Among those who purchased pieces, stars at the South Shore Music Circus, such as Liberace, Sergio Franco, and Lena Horne, were attracted by the simple sign, "Miniature Chairs," outside his home. Barbara Conte, Carlo's daughter, joined Carlo in this enterprise, at first carefully painting his Hitchcock chairs but later making some of the furniture in collaboration with her father. After his death she continued to create many pieces expanding the inventory to include dollhouse accessories.

The Society is the proud owner of several pieces of Conte furniture. In 1983 the Conte family donated eight pieces to the Society, followed in 1992 by several pieces given by Mary Fleming, owner of Fleming's Hardware on Elm Street. Our collection has grown over the years to include close to 150 pieces, the bulk of which were donated in 2009 by Barbara Conte.

These pieces are stored in Carlo Conte's original cabinet, which is on display at the Pratt Building.



## Upcoming Exhibits at the Pratt Building

### *A Tribute to Frank Sinatra: Garments from the Rat Pack Era*

With spring on the horizon, the winter exhibit at the Pratt Building has mostly been stored away. Remaining on exhibit is our tribute to the Richardson White family. The Society's collection of Richardson White family paintings and textiles is enhanced by the loan of two of his bronze sculptures. Don't miss the opportunity to see these magnificent examples of his work before they are returned to their owners.

In the Meeting Room we are paying a special tribute to Frank Sinatra who would have turned 100 on December 12 of last year. On display are pieces from our collection that recall the glory days of the Rat Pack era, including an almost life-size poster of Rat Pack member Sammy Davis, Jr, who entertained audiences at the Music Circus.

Please stop by the Pratt Building to see these unique and fun exhibits. Something new will take their place in March, which will give us yet another chance to see you again.



Since 2001 when Judy Dickstein joined the board, the Society has gained from her wise counsel and winning manner, her many talents as a gardener and craftsperson, and her strong ties to the Community Garden Club of Cohasset. The Society's creative Program Chair from 2006 to 2014, she engaged speakers for our monthly lecture series and twice-a-year members' dinners, who interpreted Mrs. Paul Revere and Isabella Stewart Gardner, provided medical supplies for wounded soldiers during the American Civil War, or clothed the likes of George Washington at Mount Vernon. The garden club's president from 2004 to 2006, she brought their annual plant sale to the grounds of the Pratt Building beginning in 2006. And, for some ten years wrote a regular column for their newsletter on the subject of herbs – their histories and medicinal benefits, as well as their toxic properties and culinary delights. Her own garden, with acres of woodlands around her home, might be described as eclectic, the result of her self-proclaimed "well-rounded addiction to plants."

Judy's story and her notable career in nursing, however, began in St. John, NB, where she

## Member Profile: Judy Dickstein

Paula Morse



was born and where she returned in 1961 (after moving to this country when she was three), to attend St. John General Hospital School of Nursing. After graduating, she worked at the Massachusetts Memorial Hospital (now BU Medical Center) in Boston, where she met and married Dr. Harvey Dickstein, a Resident in Surgery. Later on, Judy received an AAB and a BSN from St. Elizabeth

College in College Station, NJ. Most of her nursing has been in the operating room – at NIH in Bethesda, MD and Princeton Medical Center, NJ. She also was a PRN on call for the West Windsor (CT) school system, and a Device Safety monitor with Mitek (a Johnson & Johnson company) in Westwood, MA.

In 1996 Judy and Harvey moved to Cohasset, loving the easy access to Boston; two years later Judy became a U.S. citizen. Both of their children are lawyers: Jason, with a practice in D.C., lives in Bethesda, MD; Debra, who specializes in child welfare, works for the State of Oregon, and lives in Carnas, WA; five grandchildren share in Judy's love for reading. The Dicksteins enjoy traveling and have been to Europe many times, but their Alaskan cruise and tour of the Western National Parks count among their favorites.

Inspired by a lifetime of gardening, Judy's hopes for the Society's future depend on our many volunteers, like plants growing together to unite the whole. To keep the Society vital, she feels we must continue to attract new members and encourage them to take an active part.

### Donors

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James C. Wilson  
Barbara and Kevin Wrenn

## 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-third 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.)*

### Friday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1858

The wind breezed up last night from the North and blew fresh all night. This morning it continues the same it is a pleasant morning we are making some progress on our passage home. We are all well and happy with the expectation of being home soon, we sent letters from Gibraltar, informing them of our going to N York, and shall expect letters on our arrival there. We are continually coming up with vessels bound to the westward but this vessel glides on so easily that it is not uncomfortable. it is getting moderate towards night.

### Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1858

quite moderate this morning we have a light breeze from the North, it is a lovely day and we are in fine spirits our Barometers indicate an Easterly wind, hope it may be so, as that is what we want to help us along.

Not many vessels in sight today we passed an American Bark yesterday bound to the Westward thought it might be the Cambridge Capt Harding from Messina for Boston.

We had a little breeze from the North this afternoon Capt Kallock is busy making a new main royal sail.

### Sunday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1858

We seem to have moderate weather, today is pleasant but we have been becalmed all morning, but now we have a breeze from the North again. It is Sunday and all is quiet on board. The discipline on board the Pathfinder is good, The Officers are experienced and faithful and the Sailors show no unwillingness to comply with all that is required of them. The Captain also commands our highest respect and esteem by his friendliness and attention to all.

It remains about the same this afternoon, only a light breeze we just move along have made only a degree each day the last 3 or 4 days.



### Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1858

Nearly calm this morning there is some appearance of an Easterly wind.

Yesterday afternoon we picked up a boat marked Candace. No. 5 London it was full of water and had not been a long time adrift. It contained a large shawl such as are worn by Gentlemen, also a Gentlemans Dressing gown. They were found tied to the boat, it was evident that she had been cast off in a hurry, for her lashings had been cut hastily by some one, we know nothing of her previous history but we may when we arrive in N York The boat was in good condition.

### Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1858

We have a good breeze this morning from the NEast. Yesterday afternoon we had a breeze from the North which was some help, we are now going about 7 knots which is better than we have done since Friday. The weather is cloudy with showers.

The wind moderates towards night with some appearance of a calm night. This afternoon a school of Porpoises came playing round the bow of the vessel, some one tried to catch one, by throwing an iron sharpened for the purpose but it unfortunately broke off, in the back of one of them and the Porpoise escaped.

### Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1858

We had a light breeze all night with showers.

This morning is cloudy with rain squalls, the wind is still NEast, but not a strong breeze, we are nearing the Western Islands The weather is cool and damp, much like the weather we have at home in May. We are sailing at 7 1/2 knots an hour.

The weather remains the same till night foggy with rain squalls.

another school of Porpoises came along side this afternoon but they were not molested.

### Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1858

Last evening breeze increased and our speed increased to 9 knots per hour but don't know whether she continued at that rate or not this morning the fog and clouds had disappeared and the sun was brightly shining with a light breeze from the Eastward, it has since hauled SEast, which is favorable for us, but wish there was more of it.

Very pleasant this afternoon with a light baffling wind.

*In the next installment, as the Pathfinder continues its journey across the Atlantic, the Percival family celebrates youngest daughter Drusy's birthday, and Capt. Kallock helps out a Peruvian schooner bound for Liverpool.*

## Winter 2016 CHS Volunteers

L-R: Will Gildea, Jack Coffman, Morgan Fechter and Jackson Dutton. Cohasset High School students who enroll in the social studies elective, "Civics and Community Service," often choose to volunteer at the Historical Society for the service component of the class. The "lucky ones" who do serve the Society are always profoundly impressed by the artifacts and collections held by the Cohasset Historical Society.



## Volunteer Opportunities

**Administrative** Provide office support to the staff by answering phone calls, greeting visitors and other office-related work

**Building/Grounds** Help maintain the physical plant and building grounds

**Education** Teach a workshop and host small groups at the museums and Pratt Building

**Events/Evening Series** Arrange for speakers, setting-up, hosting events

**Exhibits** Research and prepare exhibits

**Fundraising** Assist with fundraising events and related activities

**Hospitality** Bring refreshments and host events

**Newsletter** Write articles, mailing

**Textile** Help in the Textile Room

### The Society notes with sadness the passing of

Gerry Lipsett

George Sechen

Peter Tolman

David Whipple

Lucia Woods

### Welcome New Members

Linda and Donald Beach

Antoni and Julia Drybanski

Michele and Michael Hubley

Catherine Oliver Lyons

Peter Pratt

Cindy and Alec Swartwood

Susan Acton and John Thompson

## Backroads of the South Shore

### South Shore History Symposium

*Harvesting Land & Sea:*

*A History of Agriculture &*

*Aquaculture on the South Shore*

**Saturday, April 9, 2016**

**10:00 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.**

Spire Center for the Performing Arts

25 Court Street, Plymouth

\$15, includes breakfast refreshments

Reservations recommended

[paula.fisher@SeePlymouth.com](mailto:paula.fisher@SeePlymouth.com)

## Your Part in History

Karen Golden Oronte

History is important. As a volunteer, I have witnessed some of the wonderful riches preserved at the Cohasset Historical Society. There are records and photographs of families, buildings and town affairs that go back to Cohasset's beginnings and show how we have evolved from our fishing village past. The Society's collections include products of local manufacturers and the tools and equipment of fishermen and farmers, as well as the clothing people wore and even the games they played.

Cohasset is fortunate to have so many people willing to volunteer – they are the glue that helps to hold our community together. Preserving our past is an important way of establishing roots and community pride. Studying Cohasset might include an introduction to the world renowned Hanlon Brothers, the acrobatic and pantomime company based here, or the dozen or so 19th century seashore resort hotels, or why Louis C. Tiffany bought land in Beechwood.

If you are interested in helping preserve Cohasset's heritage, I appeal to you to contact the Society. If you do not have the time right now, then please consider urging a friend to become a member.

## Do You Know?

### When to use Historic and Historical?

**Historic:** The adjective historic means having importance in history or having influence on history.

**Historical:** The adjective historical means having taken place in history, from the past or pertaining to history.

**Side-by-side examples:** This is an *historical* event (one that happened in the past).

This is an *historic* event (one that is important in history, e.g., the moon landing).

## A New Item in our Gift Shop

20" x 20" cotton throw pillow with vintage image of the Pratt Building. \$45 + tax.

This is only one of the newest items in our gift shop. Available through our online gift shop ([cohassethistoricalsociety.org](http://cohassethistoricalsociety.org)) and at the Society headquarters at 106 South Main Street.



## Calendar of Events

Exhibit: March 1-31

*A Tribute to Frank Sinatra: Garments from the Rat Pack Era*

April 9, Saturday

Backroads of the South Shore 12th Annual History Symposium

10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. - please see page 7 for details

April 10, Sunday

Volunteer Appreciation Reception

2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Pratt Building, no charge

April 13, Wednesday

7:00 p.m. Light refreshments

7:30 p.m. Speaker: Jin Kim, Conductor of the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra

Topic: History of the Atlantic Symphony Orchestra

Pratt Building, suggested donation \$5

April 24, Sunday, Annual Spring Dinner

Atlantica Restaurant, 40 Border Street

5:30 p.m. Cocktail Reception

6:00 p.m. Dinner

7:00 p.m. Speaker: Richard Pickering from Plimouth

Plantation. Performance of Phineas Pratt, a resident of Plimouth in the 1620s. Complete details in late March.

May 11, Wednesday

Movie Night: The Witches of Eastwick

6:30 p.m. Early start. Admission \$2 per person

Refreshments.

May 15, Sunday

2-4:00 p.m. MacIvor Reddie Reception, the murals at the Pratt Building and other works by the artist. Share stories about MacIvor Reddie with members of the Reddie family.

Refreshments.

Pratt Building, suggested donation \$5

May 27, Friday

Veterans' Reception

6-8:00 p.m. Pratt Building, no charge

June 8, Wednesday

6:00 p.m. Meet on the Common by Meetinghouse Pond

Speaker: Merle Brown on the history of Meetinghouse Pond

Refreshments at the Second Congregational Church

Open Hours at the Pratt Building • 106 South Main Street

Monday- Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

The Wilson House and Maritime Museum are closed for the season.

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WINTER 2016

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COHASSET HISTORICAL SOCIETY

