



HISTORICAL Highlights

Cohasset Historical Society • Quarterly Newsletter • Winter 2017

Officers

President - Kathleen O'Malley
First Vice President - Joy Pratt Schiffmann
Second Vice President - Linda Pratt
Recording Secretary - Joy Pratt Schiffmann
Treasurer - William Todd

Directors

Eleanor Bleakie James Campbell
Judy Dickstein Mindy Evans
Deborah Jenks Paula Morse
Annette Sawchuk Judy Sestito
Lorraine Tarpey

Staff

Lynne DeGiacomo
Rebecca Bates-McArthur
Julia Gleason

Historical Highlights

For information on membership and programs, please visit our website www.CohassetHistoricalSociety.org

or contact us

781-383-1434

PO Box 627, Cohasset, MA 02025
CohassetHistory@yahoo.com



©2017 Cohasset Historical Society.
All rights reserved.

This quarterly newsletter, or any part thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without the written permission from the president of the Cohasset Historical Society.

Cover photo: Joy Pratt Schiffmann

From the President

As the years continue to move along, the theme of Transportation for this *Historical Highlights* seems timely. My first thoughts about modes of transportation in Cohasset refer back to 2003, when the Society purchased the Pratt Building. In the afternoons, we would hear strange sounds coming from the front of the building. Upon investigation, we found that we had inherited the after school skateboarders. Although we had to send them packing, the black stains on the front steps remain a permanent reminder of this popular way of traveling.

The 88th annual meeting of the Society was held on Sunday, October 23rd at the Lighthouse Keepers Residence. During the business portion, we thanked Tom Gruber and Jackie Kleinz for having served on the board so diligently, and welcomed Lorraine Tarpey as a new member. Tom was awarded the 2016 Volunteer of the Year. His dedication and involvement with the Society have been invaluable, ever since he joined the board in 1997 and, especially, as First Vice President from 2002 until 2016. Tom and Werner Diekmann, co-chairs of the Building and Grounds Committee, were the "Clerks of the Works" when we put in the two income apartments at the Pratt Building. Tom also chaired the Cohasset Community Preservation Committee and was responsible for the successful applications and the generous funding and support, which the Society has received from the residents of the town.

The evening's speaker, Francis Collins, a retired merchant mariner and Cohasset resident, shared details of the loss of the *Andrea Doria*. Special guests were Joan and Mark Trask. Mark's father, Harry Trask, won the Pulitzer Prize in Photojournalism in 1957 for his photograph of the sinking of the ship. This program will be available on the web at Cohasset 143tv.

As we travel through 2017, I would like to thank everyone for their ongoing support and for the generosity of the donors to the 2016/2017 Annual Appeal and to the Art Acquisition and Restoration Fund.

Wishing you all a very happy 2017.

Kathleen L. O'Malley, *President*

The Society is grateful to the following institutions for their sponsorships



Become a Corporate Sponsor today! Picture your logo here.

Contact us for details 781-383-1434 • Website: CohassetHistoricalSociety.org

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-sixth 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 12th, 1858

Last night wind increased during the night and this morning we have a fresh breeze from the Westward with a heavy head sea it is quite rough the wind is better for us than it has been for many days, though we are not heading a direct course it is 6 weeks today since we left Malta but we have had very bad winds or we should have been to N York. I think it is nearly a fortnight since we have had a fair wind.

At 6 o'clock reefed top sails and mainsail.

Sunday, June 13th, 1858

At 4 o'clock wind blew very heavy and a rough sea, wind still West we are in the neighborhood of the Grand Bank, and the air is very chilly though the water is quite warm as we are near the Gulf Stream. The Sec Mate Mr. Moore reports seeing an iceberg this morning, it does not seem possible as we are not in the vicinity of them but it was probably a stray one. It is a very pleasant day.

The wind has moderated and the sea is smoother this afternoon, we have a nice breeze from the North which is very good.

Monday, June 14th, 1858

Early this morning the wind was light and baffling, from North to SWest it however breezed from SWest varying a little, we have now a fresh breeze and are heading NWest. We are in the Gulf Stream hope this breeze will continue sometime. Yesterday we were 1200 miles from N York have gained 300 miles with a head wind the last 3 days, saw a brig this morning bound Eastward.

We are gaining at the rate of 10 miles an hour but wind hauls to the Westward and at 4 o'clock PM we have a head wind is it not discouraging, but it is useless to complain.

Tuesday, June 15th, 1858

We had heavy showers during the middle watch and a fresh breeze with squalls and a head sea, took in light sail it rained in torrents, we are opposite the Grand Bank though some distance to the Southward of it. The wind is WNWest and we cannot keep our course direct

we have had rain squalls all the morning and a fresh breeze, saw an American Barque this morning bound East. At 6 o'clock PM we are North of the Gulf Stream and the weather has changed from warm to quite cold, we have a head wind yet, blowing a fresh breeze.

Wednesday, June 16th, 1858

Calm this morning it blew very hard during the night, it is cloudy, saw 5 vessels bound in different directions. had a fair wind about 3 hours from SWest it very soon hauled to the Westward and headed us from our course again.

It is breezing up strong again, and is foggy cannot see the length of the vessel but we are comfortable any way. The Pathfinder is a first rate Sea Boat. It has been extremely cold all day fires would be comfortable.

At 6 o'clock thick fog, with heavy rain squalls and cold.

Thursday, June 17th, 1858

We had a heavy shower this evening, wind changed to NWest and clear and cold, wind increased to a strong breeze reefed top sails, at

12 PM had a heavy head sea afterward wind changed to NNEast tacked ship and headed on course again, it is quite moderate but the wind is fair, but light have set studding sails first time for 3 weeks. It has been moderate all day nearly calm wind baffling to all points of the compass foggy at night.

Friday, June 18th, 1858

Cloudy this morning and thick moderate during night wind SWest we are on the western edge of the Grand Banks, thick and foggy with rain cold and disagreeable.

At noon wind increased and the Barometer falling all the time, which indicates a gale. at 4 o'clock reefed top sails, sea quite smooth at 8 PM reefed foresail, and came round.

foggy with showers
Barometer still falling

At 10 PM wind more moderate.

Friday, June 19th, 1858

Wind continued the same till morning when it changed to NWest pleasant and clear but very cold for June, we have not got a fair wind yet, we are heading to the South but blowing fresh, have made sail again.

It is 2 years today since my Father died should like to hear from home to day.

Saw a large ship, this morning bound to Westward

At 12 o'clock reefed top sails and at 6 PM shook out reefs the wind had moderated very much saw the ship at night again and left astern.

In the next installment, the Pathfinder continues to inch its way toward New York.

Image source: Google images



Early Travel in Cohasset

Paula Morse



Passengers- piled up- on this stagecoach, which ran between Greenbush and the Hingham steamboat.

By Land

Until 1848 and the arrival of the train, Cohasset residents and businesses alike depended on horse-drawn carriages and sailing vessels for personal travel or the transport of goods and services to Boston and other towns along the way. Since demand exceeded supply, especially in the winter, both were usually overcrowded and unpredictable in their schedules.

For shorter distances, if you just wanted to get around town or go see a friend or buy something in neighboring Hingham or Scituate, you usually walked or caught a ride with someone who had a fishing boat or a horse and a two-wheel cart that could manage the rocky and often narrow, mud-slotted roads.

Stagecoaches typically traveled about five miles an hour and covered about sixty or seventy miles. Since the resting, watering and feeding of the horses required frequent stops, the route had "stages" or stations. To speed up the already lengthy and tiring journey, a fresh set of horses was often re-hitched to the coach. Fortunately for Cohasset, about 1840, a branch of the stagecoach line from Boston was added at the Black Rock House on Jerusalem Road. This was particularly welcome for summer visitors, including those who came for the extremely popular sport of coot shooting.

The livery business thrived in Cohasset, with the Tilden Brothers, Caleb and Amos, among the busiest. Caleb's stable was at Constitution Park, next to the present day post office. Amos operated his at 57 Elm Street, between the village and the harbor. A number of blacksmiths and carriage and cushion makers were located in the village to support this lucrative trade.

By Sea

On the other hand, the primary purpose of the small packet boats, mainly sloops with a single mast and a fore-and-aft rig, was the carrying of goods. Passengers were only added if there was sufficient room. Barrels of fish, farmers' butter and eggs, lumber, and even sand took precedent, but usually there was no charge in return for helping the skipper. Larger packet ships, such as the schooners and barks owned by the Tower and Bates families, carried all kinds of freight and went many times to the Mediterranean. But that is a different story.

Steamboats between Hingham and Boston began as early as 1819; from 1832 to 1845, the journey on the *General Lincoln*, with George Beal of Cohasset as captain, took just an hour and a half. In contrast to today's commuters who drive from Cohasset to the boat at the Hingham Shipyard, passengers at that time often walked the four or five miles to get there.

By the time Drusilla Percival and her family reached New York City after almost two years at sea, the final entry in her diary, on Saturday, July 3, 1858, noted that they "went on board the Steamboat last night [in New York City] at 4 o'clock PM and arrived in Boston at 8 AM and took the cars [the train] for Cohasset." (Drusilla's 36th installment can be seen on page 2). **HH**



The Upper Harbor from Prouty's Wharf, showing Lawrence wharf and the packet Hattie Avery, owned by Capt. James Collier.

Sources

- Bigelow, E. Victor, *A Narrative History of the Town of Cohasset, Massachusetts* (1898; reprinted 1981)
- Wadsworth, David H., Paula Morse and Lynne DeGiacomo, *Images of America: Cohasset* (2004)

Profile: Henry Melville Whitney

Lynne DeGiacomo



Clockwise: Henry M. Whitney at Cohasset, ca. 1900. Whitney family at Cohasset, ca. 1910, Henry Whitney, seated in center. The Jerusalem Road estate, ca. 1880.



During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, wealthy Bostonians built large summer estates along Jerusalem Road. Attracted to Cohasset because of its cool ocean breezes, these families sought relief from the sweltering heat of the city. Among this group, Henry Melville Whitney had an estate near today's Howe Road and Tad Lane.

Whitney was born in 1839 to one of the nation's prominent families. He began his career in banking, in New Hampshire and Boston, and then became a clerk in the office of the Navy in the Boston Custom House. When the Civil War started in 1861, Whitney went to New York City to work in the shipping business. He returned to Boston in 1866 as an agent in his father's Metropolitan Steamship Company, which operated steamships between Boston and New York.

In 1878 Whitney married and established a primary residence in Brookline. The couple had five children. Looking to diversify his interests, in 1886 Whitney established the West End Street Railway Company, which operated a number of horse-drawn streetcar lines around Boston. Eventually the company had nearly 1,500 streetcars being pulled by approximately 7,900 horses. Similar companies ran their own lines and Boston, like other large cities, became highly congested with horse-drawn streetcars.

While primarily a summer resident, Whitney loved spending time in Cohasset. He was one of the original 30 members of the Cohasset Golf Club, the course being laid out on land he donated for that purpose. His estate overlooking Jerusalem Road included his "summer cottage," many outbuildings,

a horse show ring, and approximately 690 wooded acres that was purchased from his estate after his death by a group of Cohasset citizens who gave it to the Town of Cohasset. Today it is known as Whitney Woods. The *Hingham Journal* described the estate in a June 4, 1886 article, "The purchase by Henry M. Whitney of the larger portion of Turkey Hill promises to result in a great advantage to the public. Mr. Whitney is building a carriage road to the top of the hill, and under proper restrictions this road will be open to his friends. The view from the top of the hill is one of the finest in the State. Mr. Whitney's land now extends from Jerusalem Road to the top of Turkey Hill."

Whitney's Cohasset friends and neighbors ranked among the most powerful in the state. Along Jerusalem Road, Albert Pope of the Pope bicycle and automobile companies owned a 50-acre estate; Horace Coolidge, Boston lawyer and member of both the Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives, built a "wooden cottage"; Lyman Hollingsworth, former governor of Massachusetts, owned a large estate encompassing today's Deep Run. An article copied from an unidentified newspaper described the close association among the neighbors, "It was at Cohasset last July and perhaps on the piazza of Whitney's house that the mischief was done . . . the building of the West End Railroad." A syndicate was formed between prominent Boston lawyer, Henry Hyde; Maverick Bank President, Asa Potter; successful real estate developer, Grenville Braman and Whitney as original members. Albert Pope joined soon thereafter. Whitney and his brother, William Collins Whitney of New York City, both believed that the public would be better served if street railways were built underground. The competition between the two brothers to have their city be the first in the nation to have an underground railway is the subject of Doug Most's recent book, *The Race Underground*, which has been selected as a book group read by the communities along the Greenbush rail line. As part of their programming, Doug Most has agreed to talk to Cohasset Society members about Henry Whitney and his interesting life. We hope to offer this program in the spring. **HH**

History of the Train in Cohasset

Rebecca Bates-McArthur

The coming of the railroad to Cohasset played a pivotal role in the development of the town as it changed from a seafaring to a land-based economy. On March 26, 1846, a stock company was incorporated to build a new branch line of the Old Colony Railroad. Built between Braintree and Cohasset, the new line was called the South Shore Railroad and it linked the coastal towns to the earlier railroad leading to Boston. On January 1, 1849, the railroad opened with much celebration. In Cohasset, the Weymouth Brass Band played, Rev. Joseph Osgood gave the blessing, and a cold collation with hot coffee and clam chowder was served. The train ran twice daily, and more frequently during the summer for seasonal residents and the many people who could now take the train to visit Cohasset's picturesque seashore. Since the southern terminus of the railroad was located at the business center of town, many of the employees lived there. In fact, quite a few of the older houses on the hillside just west of the area were built to house railroad workers.

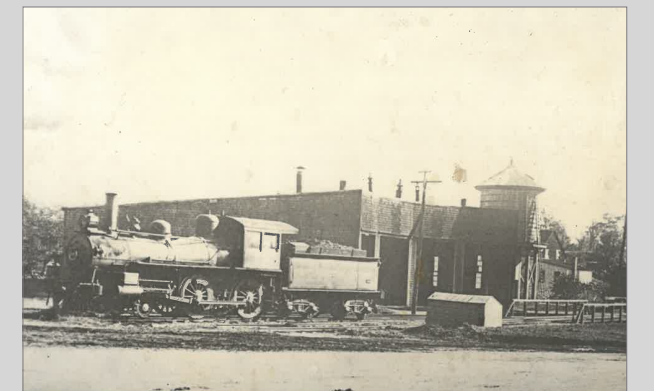
Between 1849 and 1871, the railroad's maintenance and storage facility was located in the area now occupied by the municipal parking lot, near the junction of Ripley Road, Depot Court, and Pleasant Street. The buildings on the site included freight buildings, a 45-foot diameter turntable, a four-bay "roundhouse," where the engines were stored, and a water tank used to refill the locomotive's steam engines. In 1871, the railroad was extended to Duxbury. All of the facilities have disappeared, probably in the 1920s, but evidence of their presence can be seen on the old maps of Cohasset Village.

In 1997, when the MBTA did the Environmental Impact study for the Old Colony Railroad reconstruction plan, research was begun to locate and record information for these structures. In 2000, Public Archeology Lab (PAL), of Rhode Island, made a preliminary archaeological excavation of the parking lot, and in 2004, an intensive dig was done, directed by Dr. Mitchell Mulholland of UMASS Amherst. This included uncovering and documenting the entire turntable and its foundation and the roundhouse, as well as locating some artifacts and documenting the site. The stone wall forming the sidewall of the underground base was found and various other cut stone blocks associated with the turntable. A section of iron bar that may have been part of a system of underground radiating arms designed to help stabilize the turntable mechanism was also located. The 4-bay roundhouse was unearthed and the walls of the pits were uncovered. Because the site was located over much of the town parking lot, it was necessary to refill the area and repave the parking lot. Fortunately, the Cohasset Fire Department was able to take pictures of the turntable from the top of the ladder truck before the site was refilled. Signage has been placed at the parking lot to document this important part of the history of Cohasset.

Passenger train service on the South Shore was discontinued in 1959, with the opening of the Southeast Expressway. In 1984, the MBTA began to study the feasibility of restoring commuter rail service to the South Shore to ease the area's transportation problems. After many years of debate and discussion, the Greenbush Rail Line of the MBTA was built along the established rail bed originally constructed in the 1850s. On October 31, 2007, regular commuter rail service returned to the South Shore. **HH**



The third train station at Depot Court, 1887.



Roundhouse, water tower and turntable; New York, New Haven and Hartford train engine at roundhouse, made from lantern slide, ca. 1909.



View of excavated turntable, 2004. Courtesy of Rebecca Bates-McArthur.

Restoration Project: Cohasset's Vintage Hand Tub Pumpers

Joy Pratt Schiffmann



The Konohasset in line for refurbishment at Firefly Restoration.



The Independence being taken off the flatbed truck as it arrives in Hope, ME.



Andy Swift, owner of Firefly Restoration, Hope, ME and Rob Saucier, antique fire equipment expert, Gardiner, ME.

About 1848 the residents of Cohasset voted at town meeting to buy a "hand tub" pumper and build a station for it. The firehouse was completed in 1849 and the new pumper moved in. The *Independence* was built by the renowned Hunneman Fire Engine Company, founded by Paul Revere's apprentice, coppersmith William Cooper Hunneman. The firehouse was located near the Tilden Livery so that when the call came in, the firemen could hitch up a team of horses to pull the engine and be on their way to the fire as quickly as possible.

The town's second pumper, the *Konohasset*, was built in Waterford, NY, in 1856, by the firm of A.L. Button & Sons. Originally commissioned by the Brooklyn Naval Yard, the *Konohasset* then served in Glen Cove, Long Island until about 1912 when it was purchased by the Cohasset Volunteer Veteran Firemen's Association.

This was never an official town pumper, although it was used occasionally to supplement the town's equipment at large fires. The *Konohasset's* primary use was for musters, which were extremely popular at the time. A muster is a contest where teams of men with pumpers are matched against one another to see which team can spray water the farthest. The *Konohasset* often competed successfully against the best men and machines of its day.

Early 19th-century fire engine decoration resembles the coach painting style of the day. Public coaches were the main mode of overland transport between towns and had bold colors with eye-catching decoration. The hand engine builders took that look and refined it. Gold leaf was used on nearly all fire engines built after 1810, along with bright colors, gold stripes, and heavy Renaissance scrolls – setting a standard that still remains.

Around 1885, the *Independence* was retired from service and replaced by the more efficient town hydrant system. The *Konohasset* served in its capacity until about 1920, when interest in musters had waned. Sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s, both vintage hand tub pumpers were stored in the then-vacant Town Home (almshouse) on Pond Street, the current site of Cohasset High School, until the building was demolished in the 1940s. Both pumpers dropped out of sight until they came to be owned by Franklin Reed, an avid antique collector. During the 1970s and 1980s, the *Konohasset* was returned as a gift to the Cohasset Historical Society and a Scituate resident acquired the *Independence* in order to restore it. In 2006 the Historical Society purchased the *Independence*.

The *Konohasset* and *Independence* are among the Historical Society's most prized assets. They not only represent mechanical marvels of their time, but they also are incredibly beautiful. Each has intricate designs with bright colors and handsome gold leaf. The *Konohasset* also boasts a striking inlaid mahogany tub. Both of them are currently undergoing refurbishment at Firefly Restoration in Hope, Maine.

When the restoration of our vintage hand pumpers is complete, they will return to Cohasset. It is the Society's hope that we will be able to secure a location to exhibit these treasures for all to see. A capital campaign is underway for this purpose.

continued →

What is a Hand Tub?

Fire was a constant threat in colonial America and fire protection an important community responsibility. While bucket brigades provided an adequate water supply to fight fires, the distance a bucket of water could be tossed limited their effectiveness.

Early fire engines (or engines as they were often called) were designed as a means to spray the water onto the fire with more force and accuracy, yet they had no means of drafting or sucking water. Bucket brigades would continuously supply the engine's "tub" (water reservoir), while a simple hand-operated piston pump would be used to force it out through a nozzle and on to the fire. The pumps were powered by volunteers rocking long arms up and down, on both sides of the machine.

These primitive hand-operated fire-fighting tubs evolved over the next hundred years. By the mid 1800s, most fire engines had the capability to draft water from nearby rivers or ponds, thus making the need to fill a tub with water obsolete, but the name "hand tub" stuck. HH

Sources

- Aurora Regional Fire Museum auroraregionalfiremuseum.org/
- FireGold.com
- The writings of David Wadsworth, Society Historian

Society Updates and Announcements

The Society Notes with Sadness the Passing of

Jack Bryant
Jane O'Hare Hamilton
Catherine Kearns
Charles Lynch
William McAuliffe
Francis Paradise
Arthur Roebuck, *Volunteer of the Year 2009*
David Sheets, *Board Member 2011-2016*
Nicholas Sommerfeld
Peter Wadsworth
Reid Weedon

New Members

Brian Buzzelli and Andrew Revel
Timothy Dinan
Rondeau Flynn
Susan Haney
Catherine Hornby and Bruce Harvey
Marjory Kaptanoglu
Elizabeth McLoughlin
Paul McLoughlin
David Noonan
Deborah Power and William Cooney
Luann Richardson
Maryanne Wetherad

Donations in Memory of

Genevieve Good

Brian, Galen, Weston and Andrew Call

Arthur Roebuck

Barbara Dillon
Martha Horsefield
Sandra and Donald Pratt

David Sheets

Lucille Hornby

2016 Annual Appeal Donors

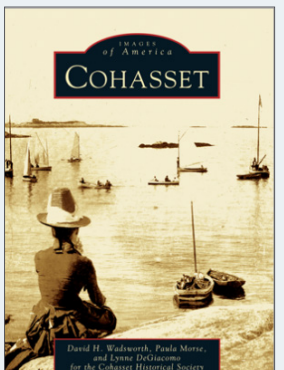
Paul and Michelle Antico
Helen and Ethan Arnold
Eleanor Bleakie
Mrs. Richard Carthaus, *in memory of Robert B. James*
Evelyn and Doug Chamberlain
Dick Chute
Carolyn and John Coffey
Terese and Nino D'Urso
Mary C. Desmond
Judy and Harvey Dickstein
Marcia and Werner Diekmann, *in memory of Jim McLaughlin*
Timothy Dinan
Jacqueline and Ralph Dormitzer
Mary and David Eisenhaure

Mindy and Chris Evans, *in memory of Peter Wadsworth*
Linda Farrag
Martha Gjestebey, *in honor of the Gjestebey Family*
Lisey Good
Kathleen and Tom Gruber
Helen and Alan Gruber
Mary and John Hartshorne
Genevra and Charles Higginson
Martha Horsefield
Diane Griswold Johnston, ** in memory of Hayden and Marjorie Griswold, Sr. and Hayden and Maude Griswold, Jr.*
Angie and Bill Kelley
Mr. and Mrs. Christopher P. Kierce
Mary Magsby, *in memory of Alice Sousa Jason and Rita Jason*
Shirley and Jim Marten**
Paula Morse
Constance C. and Nicholas W. Noon
Emmett G. O'Brien
Kathy O'Malley, *in memory of Peter Wadsworth*
Jean B. Pratt
Judy and Tony Sestito
Deborah Shadd and William Grimm
Susan and Rob Spofford
Jean Ellen and Kevin Sullivan
Chartis and Edwin Tebbetts
Janice and William Todd** *and matching grant from Exxon Mobil*
Patience and Rick Towle
Anne and Gary Vanderweil*
Dr. Edwin Woods
Barbara and Kevin Wrenn

* *Captain John Smith Society*
** *Paul Pratt Society*

Our Gift Shop

Images of America: Cohasset is a collection of vintage photographs and stories, written and compiled by our own former Historian, David Wadsworth, Executive Director, Lynne DeGiacomo, and Board member, Paula Morse.



Available for \$23 in our Pratt Building Gift Shop and online at cohassethistoricalsociety.org/gift-shop

Calendar of Events

LECTURE SERIES

February 19, Sunday

2:00 p.m. Speaker: John Roman, Artist

Topic: *The Art of Illustrated Maps*

Light refreshments

Pratt Building

Open to the public; no charge

March 11, Saturday

2:00 p.m. Tour of the Beechwood Congregational Church,

51 Church Street, Cohasset

Light refreshments

Open to the public; no charge

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.

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cohasset, MA
Permit No. 34

COHASSET HISTORICAL SOCIETY
106 SOUTH MAIN STREET
PO BOX 627
COHASSET, MA 02026
WINTER 2017

