



NAHANT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Preserving and sharing Nahant's past since 1975.
ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2017

NAHANT COMMUNITY CENTER
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Nahant – Our Village by the Sea

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Our best work happens for you and because of you.
Your support will keep the Society focused and creative for years to come!

ANNUAL MEETING, April

This year's annual meeting was a mixture of sweet and bittersweet. Our speaker, Tom Costin, with the help of Robert Wilson, presented a captivating lecture on the stewardship of the Whitney Homestead. How he was able to fit all of his research into a mere hour and one-half was mystical. The condensing of 300 years of information was incredible. So much was shared, yet so much more is yet to be heard. Thankfully, we all had a chance to hear more on July 30th at the Whitney Homestead 300th anniversary celebration. Our thanks go to Robert Wilson for his ever incredibly artistic media talent and to Tom for presenting such a wonderful lecture and for leaving us wanting more. We also thank Cindy Costin for supporting the Society by opening up her heart and home to the town.



The bittersweet came as we said goodbye to our long-time board President, Lynne Spencer. Lynne took the helm of the Society after the passing of founder, Stanley Paterson. These were big shoes to fill, but Lynne picked right up without a beat and led the Society to new and exciting heights, not the least of which was our move to the Community Center. Fortunately for the Society, Lynne has graciously consented to serve on our newly formed Advisory Board. We also said farewell to our Curator and researcher extraordinaire, Bonnie D'Orlando. After almost



three decades of organizing, cataloging, administering, collaborating, educating, and sharing, Bonnie decided to retire most of the 'hats' she has expertly worn for the Society. With Calantha Sears and our volunteers, she helped the Society through the big move from the Country Club to the Community Center, keeping tabs on our extensive archives – the size of which was truly realized when it was given more room to spread out. Bonnie nurtured this massive collection, dotting every 'i' and crossing every 't'. She educated herself on the regulations of a small museum and made sure the Society availed itself of the best craftsmen when mounting new exhibits. These exhibits, large and small, are exemplary due to Bonnie's diligence to historical detail, as well as presentation. Her day-to-day expertise will be greatly missed.

Our business side of the meeting saw amendments to our bylaws, allowing the Board to have eleven members and to set term limits. This allows for the rotating of talent through the board, holding on to those with experience and welcoming those with fresh ideas to guide us into the future, *so that the future may know the past.*

THIRD GRADE VISIT, June 8th

Third grade students in Massachusetts are required to study their home state, as well as their more local surroundings. The students in Ms. Durant's third grade class spent time in class learning about our early inhabitants and our natural surroundings. This year's visit to the Society included an introduction to what a museum is and how we process the documents and artifacts that come



Photo by Jen Durant

across our tables. They took a walk through our acquisition process, from temporary custody form to a final exhibit, *Nahant on the Rocks*. The students got a peek at our museum software and were shown how to research one of our artifacts. They were then given the task of locating one of our artifacts, which was on exhibit, - a desk school bell which had been used by long ago teacher, Miss Johnson.

The students then walked to the Whitney Homestead, where they enjoyed lunch on the terrace as Tom Costin gave them a brief history of



Photo by Jen Durant

the house stewards, from the Breeds to the Costins. The group was then led on a personal tour of this historic homestead, asking very pointed questions along the way. They were most impressed with the 'dumb waiter'! With recent rains, it was too wet to explore the gardens and the 'secret' pathway to Walton Road. Tom invited the students to come back on July 30th for the Whitney 300th anniversary celebration.

The Society is expanding its collaboration with the Johnson School to include more grade levels. We will also take part in a walk to Bailey's Hill (or is it Bayley's Hill?) to study the topography, as well as the military presence, in Nahant.

WHITNEY PAINT EVENT, June 25th

In anticipation of the 300th anniversary celebration of the Whitney Homestead, we put out a call to artists of all ages and talents, focusing on our local students, to come paint, draw, sketch, or photograph this historic house and spectacular grounds. The finished artwork would be exhibited at the Whitney celebration on July 30th.

The day evoked images of Monet, with artists and their easels tucked into the surrounding gardens creating their masterpieces. Everyone who took part that day expressed their enjoyment and hoped that we could someday gather again to repeat the experience at another Nahant estate. Stay tuned.



July 30th, WHITNEY HOMESTEAD ANNIVERSARY

"You never actually own a Patek Philippe. You merely take care of it for the next generation."

Tom Costin recited this quote as he spoke to the assembled crowd about being a steward of the Whitney Homestead. This July day was clear and warm, with a touch of humidity in the air as about 150 guests gathered to hear about being a good steward of the land and to have a directed tour of the 300 year-old dwelling. Tom and Cindy have indeed been good stewards of the Whitney Homestead. This was evidenced by the lush, vibrant, extraordinary gardens which surround this stalwart of a reminder of 1700s architecture. Folks meandered through the grounds, down through the 'secret' garden in the woods and back up to the colorful planters on the terrace, where there was a continuous line of visitors waiting to take a guided tour of the first floor.

Tom spoke eloquently about what it means to be a steward of the land, a conversation he started earlier in the year with the Johnson School third grade class. We were fortunate to have Congressman Seth Moulton, as an invited guest, who continued the thought with reminders that we are all responsible for taking care of what we have been given and that we need to work together as a community

ESSEX HERITAGE TRAILS & SAILS, September 23rd and 24th

Once again Nahant was one of 34 towns and cities on Boston's legendary North Shore to host events as part of the Essex National Heritage Area's Trails and Sails experience. The focus of this year's event was the day that the stone Buddha came to reside in the rotunda of the community center. Highlighted were the skills, machinery, and experience used by the folks at Func Art Design as they moved the hefty (1,100 pounds) granite and limestone statue into the building and onto its new resting place.

Over the course of the two-day Trails and Sails event, we entertained 54 guests – some of whom had never been to Nahant before. People were truly impressed with the photos and looping video showing the statue being lifted by crane onto the front steps and then slowly moved into the rotunda and lifted onto the plinth. The Society looks forward to the Trails and Sails each year as a way to let people know a bit about Nahant.

IN MEMORIAM

The Society was greatly saddened by the passing of long-time board member, historian, author and town servant, Daniel deStefano. On April 5th Nahant suffered the loss of an irreplaceable champion when Dan passed away from complications due to kidney disease. In addition to serving as the Director of the Nahant Public Library for 22 years, he gave unselfishly to Nahant, in myriad ways, both publicly, and behind the scenes. He constantly fought for the cause of Massachusetts' small town libraries, such as our own. Here at the Society Dan served on the Board of Directors and as counselor on many endeavors. He often assisted as editor on many of the Society's publications and, public relations material. He gave his watercolors to illustrate programs. Dan teamed up with Curator Bonnie D'Orlando and Board Secretary Suzanne Hamill to edit and graphically design our 2007 *Sacrifice of Self: Nahant and the Civil War*. It was a source of great pride to him that this book won the prestigious Albert B. Corey national award for outstanding work by a local historical society from the American Association of State and Local History. He found deep challenge and satisfaction



in personally writing his own books. Four of the five celebrate Nahant. First, *Did You See That One, Henry? Some Wildflowers of Nahant* was lavishly illustrated with the author's uniquely subtle watercolors, and published by the Society in 2000. Dan also illustrated the 2003 *Gems of Nahant* on Nahant's unique geology, which he co-authored with Robert N. Risch. This book's proceeds are shared between the Society, and the Nahant Public Library. Personally funded, *Sails and Rails of Nahant* is co-authored with Gerald W. Butler in 2014, and crammed full of centuries of maritime and railroad stories, and illustrations, including the mid-20th tale of the building of the fishing dragger *Valiant*. Despite the ongoing challenges of kidney disease, Dan continued to write and illustrate until the last few months of his life. Last but not least, Dan shared the Society's deep concern about the collections both here, and at the Nahant Public Library, which continue to tell the story of Nahant through the ages. If you have not been in to see the exhibit in the side hall of the Public Library, be sure to find time to take in this rare piece of history. Most of all, we shall miss Dan's moral compass and deeply passionate care for Nahant and its people past, present, and future.

The Society also regrets the passing of the following friends, neighbors and members: Marie E. Ford, Thomas F. Quinn, Elizabeth M. "Betty" Sherlock, Constable and Wharfinger, Paul S. English, Sr., Ray Barron and Gwendolyn Upton. These wonderful, long-time Society members and contributors to our mission will be deeply missed

HONORING OUR PRICELESS VOLUNTEERS

The Society would be lost without the daily work performed by our team of volunteers. They are the heart and soul of our organization. We cannot say enough about these folks who share our love of Nahant and know the importance of preserving and sharing its phenomenal history.

As a simple thank you, on Monday, October 23rd, the Society showed its appreciation of this incredible team of volunteers with a trip to the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard in Cambridge. We were treated to a private tour of the exhibit 'All the World is Here', which honors the Peabody's 150th Anniversary. We had time to explore other areas of the museum and were left breathless by the extent and depth of the exhibits. All expressed a desire to return to explore further. We thank board member T. Rose

Holdcraft, Senior Conservator, and her coworkers Diana Loren, Museum Curator, and Judy Jungels, Conservator, for taking us on this fantastic tour.

FOURTH GRADE HISTORY LESSONS



Photo by Jude Shanahan

This fall, the Society began a new collaboration with the Johnson School fourth grade students by introducing them to our Lowland Buddha. Our Director, Julie Tarmy, developed two lessons for the students, making connections to map reading skills and introducing core traits that help define good character. These lessons align with the national standards in language arts and social studies. Julie brought the first lesson to the classroom, sharing information on Asian Buddha, as well as our Buddha's connection to the Lowland Math Award, presented annually to a student graduating from the Johnson School. The class later visited the Society to see our Buddha exhibit and had many well thought out questions about Buddha, Nahant, and the history of the Lowland Medal. It is our plan to expand the education collaboration to more grade levels.

PATERSON LECTURE, November 12th

From 'somewhere in France', young Mortimer Robbins wrote to his mother to let her know how he was faring on the European front at the height of WWI in 1918. His story was brought to life with compassion and deep understanding by Veterans Bill Cullen and Christopher Dent, members of American Legion Post 215. The information provided by these men painted a picture of the hard won battles fought by the brave men and women of a united front, as they fought the war 'to end all wars'.



Photo by Julie Tarmy

Bill provided personal information on Mortimer and how he came to be in Belgium, fighting with the Canadian Infantry. Chris created a picture of an unimaginable series of battles waged by the Allies to protect and preserve the coastline from the German forces. Sadly, Mortimer G. Robbins paid the ultimate sacrifice and is buried with honors in Tyne Cot Cemetery outside of Ypres, Belgium. The

lecture closed with a touching video of Veterans Ed and Anna Manzano paying their respects to fellow soldier, Mortimer, at Tyne Cot in early November 2017. We thank board member, Austin Antrim, for arranging this moving event for our members.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & LOOKING AHEAD

The Society continues to respond to numerous requests for information along a varied track from individuals and organizations. Several authors, of both fiction and non-fiction, turn to us to fill in missing facts on historical events or provide support for local lore that has been passed down. We assisted in the publishing of another book on Nahant, *Bayley's or Bailey's Hill?*, by local author Gerald Butler. Board member and editor extraordinaire, Suzanne Hamill, spent several hours reading and re-reading this manuscript to ensure both factual and grammatical accuracy.

Some individuals contact us looking to complete family trees, hunting down roots that were planted in Nahant generations ago. We also continue to accept artifacts from all over the country that come to us through various routes. For example, one woman showed up from Murfreesboro, TN with a one-of-a-kind Nahant artifact that she found in Florida 45 years ago - a glass mason jar with 'Nahant Fish Market/ Boston/Oysters' etched on it. She had never heard of Nahant, but she made it her mission to find us should she ever travel to the Northeast. She did, and we now have possession of a unique item from the early 20th century. This is how our collection continues to grow.

With this in mind, back in October we had a training session on our museum software for 12 volunteers, new and seasoned, to facilitate the continued cataloging of our collection. Going forward, we will have four more intense trainings for some of these dedicated volunteers to allow us to have all of our collection available to the public. We accept new artifacts on a weekly basis. Sometimes it is one item, but often it consists of files and files of information, mostly pertaining to Nahant. It is then the responsibility of our team to discern what is truly Nahantiana, label it properly, enter it into our system, preserve it, and find a home for it in our archives. We thank our lucky stars for the folks we have on board and welcome those of you who may have recently found yourself with some free time and would like to join our fantastic and fun team.

MASS MEMORIES ROAD SHOW, April 1st

The Mass Memories Road Show (MMRS), produced by the University Archives & Special Collections Department at the Joseph P. Healy Library, UMass, Boston, is an event-based public history project which digitizes family photos and memories shared by people of Massachusetts. The Society was fortunate enough to be a part of this program this year. We collaborated with our Public Library, Council on Aging, 01908, Johnson School, S.W.I.M and Northeastern University Marine Science Center. This was partially funded by the Friends of the Nahant Public Library and Nahant Cultural Council.

This free event, held at Town Hall, invited town residents to bring up to three family photos to be scanned and then included in the archives at UMass Boston and online at <http://openarchives.umb.edu>. Participants were encouraged to share 'the story behind the photos' on video, had a 'keepsake' photo taken to record the day, and had access to professional archivists and historians who offered advice on how to date and care for their photos.

The weather on the first was less than favorable for taking family heirlooms out, but about 100 folks braved the snow and wind and took part in a once in a lifetime opportunity with MMRS. Thanks to the hard work, good spirits and passion for history, it was a splendid afternoon loaded with energy and enthusiasm.

The goal of MMRS is to visit all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to digitize the wealth of memories. As of our event, the project had digitized over 6,000 photos and stories from across the state. The website listed above is open to the public. Log on and see what tidbits of interesting history you can learn about your friends and neighbors of Nahant and surrounding cities.

INTERNS AND STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

The Society continues to be fortunate in the area of young individuals who are interested in Nahant and its rich history. High school senior, Tristan Reenstierna, continues to be a 'Jack of all trades' when it comes to research. Depending on track and basketball schedules, Tristan is a regular at the Society on Saturday mornings, where he accepts any challenge we present to him. One of the recent research requests was on the Student Army

Training Camp of 1918 at Northeastern College. We had no information on this unit in our archives, but Tristan was able to locate pertinent information which brought him to the door of the archives of Northeastern University. With the assistance of Carol McCauley at the Marine Science Center, Tristan was able to verify the significance of this training camp to Nahant and to a specific Nahant family.

Another dedicated student volunteer is 9th grader Sophie DiGrande. Sophie has been instrumental in



assembling an organized list of information in our research files, which has helped shorten the time we need to locate precise information. Sophie comes in on most

Wednesday afternoons, when she is not participating in a school sport or activity.

Both of these students are efficient hard workers who accept any chore we have, including dusting the display cases. They are genuinely interested in Nahant's history and seem to have fun learning more about this unique town.

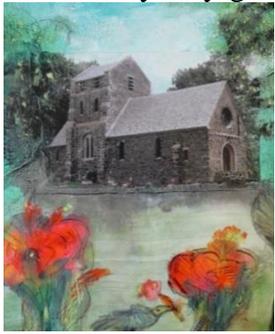
If you know a middle or high school student who might be interested in volunteering, have them stop by for a visit. We are happy to work around their school activities schedule.

The Society is working with David Goss, a Professor of Museum Studies at Gordon College, to set up an internship for interested college students. We will be working with David to develop a syllabus for this internship, where students will be able to earn either two or four college credits by interning with the Society. Student interns will have the ability to do hands-on work in cataloging, research, exhibit building and more. We hope to be able to develop a program that will allow the students to concentrate on their area of interest while expanding their knowledge of what is involved in the day-to-day operation and management of a small museum and historical society. We are excited about this opportunity and look forward to working with Gordon College.



ELLINGWOOD CONCERT SERIES

2017 was the twenty-first season of the Ellingwood Chapel Chamber Music Concerts, an activity of the Nahant Historical Society. Thanks to several yearly grants from the Nahant Cultural



Artwork by Norman Laliberte

Council and increasing support of “Friends of the Ellingwood Concerts” it has grown into a respected part of Nahant’s cultural scene.

The 2017 season began with a concert by pianist Thomas Stumpf which featured a magisterial performance of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The second concert, performed by an ensemble of the New England Philharmonic, was entitled *Rodin’s Playlist*. Music beloved by Auguste Rodin was enhanced by the presence of the sculpture by Nahant Artist, Reno Pisano. Nahant violinist Katharina Radlberger and her quartet, Fin de Siecle, featured the music of Shubert and Debussy. As the Ellingwood Chapel is ideal for the solo guitar, renowned guitarist Jose Manuel Lezcano played a program entitled *Five Centuries of Spanish Guitar*.

We had originally planned to have Thomas Stumpf open our series with the spectacular Liszt transcription of *Beethoven’s 9th Symphony*, but it had to be postponed until the fall. *Beethoven’s 9th Symphony* is traditionally played by a full orchestra. In anticipation of our fifth concert of the season, featuring Thomas Stumpf on solo piano, an article appeared in the August 31st edition of the Boston Globe about Stumpf’s preparation for this performance. This resulted in a sold out September Saturday night followed by a sold out Sunday afternoon. More than a hundred new concert goers came to Nahant that weekend.

Our final concert of the regular season featured contralto Emily Marvosh accompanied by returning New England Conservatory pianist Tanya Blaich. The program included songs from Mahler and Brittan, Shubert and Brahms, performed in memory of the legendary duo from

the mid-twentieth century, Bruno Walter and Kathleen Ferrier.

In bringing our 2017 season to an end, St. Thomas Aquinas Church was the site of our Christmas Concert. The acoustics of St. Thomas were perfect for Brian Jones and the Copley Singers.

Our 2017 concert series was a resounding success. We thank everyone who played a part in supporting this venture, either by attending, volunteering your time and energy, or being one of our most generous benefactors. We look forward to our twenty-second season of bringing unique musical experiences to our quintessential village by the sea.

WHAT’S NEW?

Our **Memories** project, which has been in the works for a few years, has finally been launched. Board member Anne Cote has worked diligently to see this through. The first ‘memory’ appeared on our website and Facebook page in September. Since then, we have shared five wonderful stories about growing up in Nahant. Response on Facebook has been positive, eliciting snippets of other childhood memories. We plan to continue with a new story every month. If you have a reminiscence you would like to share, please stop by the Society. ‘Memories’ forms can also be found at the Public Library. Let’s hear from you!

‘Bayley’s or Bailey’s Hill?’ The Society was delighted to publish Captain Gerald Butler’s newest book on Nahant. Which spelling do you agree with? Despite long research on Gerry’s part, and by others, there is no definitive answer. There is strong support for either spelling.

‘Bayley’s or Bailey’s Hill?’ debuted at the holiday fair on November 25th at Town Hall. Gerry was on hand all day signing copies at the Society’s table. So many books were sold that we had to do a quick reorder. If you haven’t picked up your copy, we still have some at the Society for \$25.

Thank you to all of our members for making 2017 an incredible year. We could not continue to preserve and share without your support.