



# The Marston's Grist

The newsletter of the Marstons Mills Historical Society

P.O. Box 1375 Marstons Mills, MA 02648

## A few words from the President...

*Another half year has progressed since the previous issue of The Grist, with numerous activities by this active Society. Not only have we benefitted from a variety of presenters at our regular meetings, but we also embarked on what was, for us, a new "venture"--participation in the annual Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival. This experience was made possible by a high percentage of volunteers from both the Society and the Village Association. The favorable result was not only an increase in the revenue for the Society, but also a wider exposure of the Society to the community at large as a presence in our Village. The Society during these months has once again been the beneficiary of enthusiastic support from the community and its members, and as a result it continues to be a valuable resource for Marstons Mills.*

—David S. Martin, President

**Calendar: Next MMHS meeting:** Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 2 PM Library  
Program: More Gold Rush History & Cape Cod

## HYDRANGEA FESTIVAL



The Society participated for the first time in the Cape-wide Hydrangea Festival on July 13 and 14. Four Marstons Mills Gardens were on view—Burgess House, Longmeadow Farm (Santuit-Newton Road), 14 Fulling Mills Lane off of River Road, and 1960 Main Street, near the corner of Route 28. Hosts at the sites included Donna Lawson at Burgess House, Harry Rigollet at Longmeadow Farm, Carol Harper at

Fulling Mills Lane, and Barbara Stewart at 1960 Main St. A team of volunteers from the Society, as well as several from the Village Association, staffed shifts in morning and afternoon of both days. The hard-working and faithful volunteers included Wendy Bierwirth, Bette Ann Bierwirth, Tony Mulone, Marguerite Adams, Rick Presbrey, Barbara Ryshavy, Jeffrey Crocker, Sandy Bolton, Anne Firth, Bob Firth, Lin Gifford, Kalpna Thuraismy, Jane Zulkiewicz,

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*The Mission of the Marstons Mills Historical Society is to foster an interest in the story of our village. We preserve historical images, documents and artifacts, research historic resources and support educational opportunities for all ages for villagers and other interested persons, in order to better understand and appreciate the past, present and future of Marstons Mills.*

**\*\*The MMHS meets on the second Tuesday of every month at 2:00 p.m. at Marstons Mills Public Library.\*\***

## MMHS OFFICERS

*President: David Martin*

*Vice-President: Rick Presbrey*

*Secretary: Marguerite Adams*

*Treasurer: Bebe Brock*

*Archivist: Dianne Potter*

*Website Mgr. & Grist Editor:*

*Wendy Bierwirth*

*Past Presidents:*

*Bob Frazee & Sandra Bolton*

## BOOK STORE

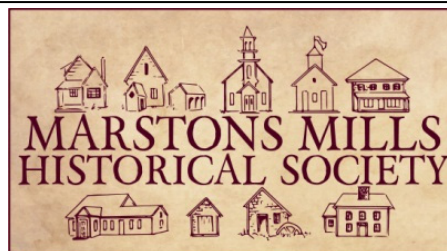
***Images of America: Marstons Mills.*** An Arcadia Publication written by local historians James Gould and Vivian Cushing. Limited signed copies. View this publication at [marstonsmillshistorical.org/publications](http://marstonsmillshistorical.org/publications). Available for purchase at MMPL.

**NOTE: prices of some books have been reduced!**

***Explore! Contemporary Marstons Mills, Cape Cod***  
A limited edition, full-color book by Sandra Bolton. Mail a check payable to MMHS for \$32 plus \$5 shipping and handling to P.O. Box 1375, Marstons Mills MA 02648. Also available by emailing [boltonslanding@comcast.net](mailto:boltonslanding@comcast.net), subject line: order book.



Comments and articles for submission should be sent to [davidmartindr@aol.com](mailto:davidmartindr@aol.com)



## MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ I / we wish to **join** the Society and enclose payment for my / our Individual Membership(s) at \$20 each.

☐ I / we wish to **renew** my/our membership for 2024 at \$20 each.

☐ I / we wish to make a charitable contribution to the Society to support the development of its Village Archives and the Preservation of its Collection.

\$250    \$150    \$75    \$25    \$10    Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street / POB: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I / we wish to be notified about MMHS Meetings.

Please mail your check or bring it to the Library, marked for MMHS. Regular meetings are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month, 2:00pm. Thank you!

*The Marstons Mills Historical Society is  
a 501 (c) 3 Charitable Organization*

Cut-out and return to the address on the bottom of the form.

P.O. Box 1375

Marstons Mills, MA 02648

[marstonsmillshistorical.org](http://marstonsmillshistorical.org)

## HYDRANGEA FESTIVAL ... CONT'D

Teresa Halloran, Jeannie Oakley, Donna Lawson, Judy Liuzza, Debbie Lavoie, Bob Frazee, Alex Frazee, and Nancy Shoemaker. A rainy day on Saturday and a fairly hot day on Sunday presented some challenges, but everyone came through faithfully. All four of our site hosts seemed pleased with the procedures and were most cordial to us. All-told, the net revenue to the Society was \$1000, and a payment of \$300 beyond that was paid to the Marstons Mills Village Association for their participation with four volunteers from the Association, which made possible full coverage of all sites on both days. A big thank-you goes to all!

## CAPE COD CANAL HISTORY

The January 2024 program was a presentation on the rich history of the Cape Cod Canal by Samantha Gray, a Park Ranger with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. She told the story of the construction of the canal—it took three tries to complete it, starting in the late 1800's until completion in 1914, after the concept of a canal had been originally suggested by none other than Mayflower passenger Myles Standish as early as 1627 when he saw the possibility of connecting two rivers which emptied into Cape Cod Bay and Buzzards Bay respectively. Today's waterway was significantly improved when the US Army Corps of Engineers took over the canal which had been a private project headed by August Belmont. And the Canal remains today a great topic of conversation due to the vital need for replacement of the automobile bridges somehow during the current decade.

## THE HERRING RUNS OF MARSTONS MILLS



The Society's March program featured Heather *Rockwell*, the *Director of Operations* for the Barnstable Clean Water Coalition. She informed everyone about the history of the herring runs located in Marstons Mills, as well as elsewhere on Cape Cod. The best-known run locally is situated where Mill Pond drains into the Marstons Mills River on Route 149 and Route 28. During the pre-colonial period, the runs were largely populated with two different species of herring each spring as they swam upriver from the sea to spawn and then die. As a vital source of fertilizer

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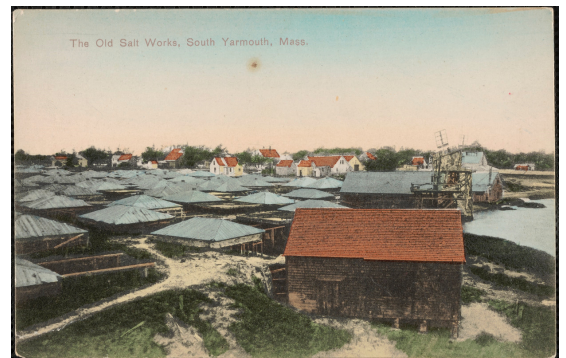


## THE HERRING RUNS ... CONT'D

and food for Native Peoples, various factors have contributed to their reduction—among which are climate change, building construction, pollution, and conversion of what were once areas of open water into cranberry bogs. In recent years, however, an encouraging increase in the number of fish counted each spring has been recorded. As a result of the presentation, several new volunteers stepped forward to carry out the 2024 count in three river locations within the Mills.

## THE SALT INDUSTRY OF CAPE COD

The history of the salt industry has been important, both economically and gastronomically on Cape Cod. Historian Bob Kelley of Dennis—who has contributed significantly to the understanding of the history of Cape Cod's indigenous peoples—gave a presentation at the April meeting of the Society on the story of salt production. Important for the preservation of food until refrigeration, the production of salt has been vital to the survival of people on Cape Cod. Several methods have been used over the centuries, one of which was the creation of large pools of seawater on the land, which then were allowed to evaporate, leaving a residue of salt; pumps, sometimes driven by windmills, brought seawater ashore into special collecting pools and vats. When the British destroyed much of the equipment of the salt industry during the Revolution, the industry had to begin again. John Sears was credited with doing just that. The large British ship, the *Somerset*, was trapped by the dangerous shoals off of the outer Cape in 1779, with many hands lost and about 400 sailors captured as by Patriots as the ship foundered. The large bilge pumps from the ship were taken by Cape residents and used to re-start the pumping action needed for the revival of the salt industry once again.



## CALIFORNIA GOLD!



At the May meeting of the Society, Secretary Marguerite Adams provided a fascinating presentation about the travels and successes of several of her ancestors in the Gold Rush in California, starting in 1848. She described research into her maternal ancestors who migrated to California from Europe during the Gold Rush, settling in the gold country of the Sierra foothills. She focused on three men—a carpenter who built

## CALIFORNIA GOLD .... CONT'D

a successful business; a rascal; and a man who ran roughshod over the women in his life and died a rich man.

She showed the diaries she's inherited that the carpenter kept on his voyage from England and in his new home in California. Although his accounts are dry, she said they "give a snapshot into what it was like to live there at that time , including sporadic violence, shootings, and hangings".

The other two relatives whose lives she highlighted were "black sheep". One, dispatched back to England to fetch his brother's future wife, had a shipboard dalliance with her that produced a child -- a fact which the family kept hidden until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Another helped rob the Wells Fargo stage, and was only kept out of San Quentin by turning state's evidence. The revolver he used is now in the collection of the Tuolumne Historical Society, the gift of Marguerite and her cousin, and is on display there.

## SOCIETY ARCHIVES EXPANDS

Thanks to the hard and well organized work of Society Archivist Dianne Potter, the Archives (located in the lower level of the Library) has some new looks. Artifacts have been re-organized, and a new file cabinet (donated by Dianne) is now in place with easily accessible file folders on different alphabetized topics. Rick Presbrey and Bob Frazee used pure muscle power to remove the previous heavy cabinet, and Stacie Hevener (Librarian) facilitated the delivery of the new cabinet. The re-arrangement of furniture also now allows more space for researchers to use. An ongoing project has also involved the selection and storing of the extensive historical and genealogical files kept by the late Vivian Cushing, whose daughter Ginny has generously donated many materials that are of direct help in the keeping of complete records of the Village. Anyone wishing to re-view materials in the Archives can do so by simply contacting David Martin to arrange an appointment; visiting researchers can easily obtain copies of any materials of interest for their research. David can be reached at [davidmartindr@aol.com](mailto:davidmartindr@aol.com).

## SANDY SNEAKERS WALKS THE VILLAGE

You do not want to miss this place!

Take a walk around Marstons Mills without a cell phone; your senses will be invigorated. (September 10th, 2pm). Really get pumped up when you learn about the little village with a big history and fabulous future.

*...cont'd on page 6*

## SANDY SNEAKERS ... CONT'D

Here is a Village whose past (and present) includes preachers, teachers, judges, doctors, lawyers, Native American descendants, bakers, butchers, blacksmiths, musicians, writers, creators, farmers, coopers, carpenters, dance-hall cuties, bootleggers, foot-stomping folks by night, and descendants of educators who walked miles every day to a one-room school house to instill the ABC's of life and the 1-2-3's of right and wrong.

This sometimes one-horse, two-cows, rooster crowing, hen-clucking dusty acres place, with a river flowing through it, became the cranberry capital of Cape Cod.

The Marstons Mills Historical Society is a treasure available to the public. It exemplifies the spirit of hopeful beginnings, faithful perseverance with ongoing commitment to community awareness with lectures, presentations, festivals, and "live" performances by the Marstons Mills Historical Society Players. Visit the "wicked-good" website—[marstonsmillshistorical.org](http://marstonsmillshistorical.org).

You also do not want to miss the opportunity to volunteer. Become a member of this exciting organization.

A brief selection of photographs of recent events follows:

