



# 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...

*As we in the Marstons Mills Historical Society look back on the 2023 year thus far, we can easily see some positive developments. We have increased our membership; we have been able to return to in-person meetings when possible; we have managed to mount a variety of programs; and we have tentative plans for programming topics for future Society meetings for a considerable number of months in the future. Included within these developments are contacts with a wider circle of individuals than in the past two-plus years during which we, like so many other voluntary organizations, passed through a period of restricted personal contacts due to the pandemic. While it might be foolhardy to think that, "It's all down-hill from here," nonetheless the sentiment is that we have somehow managed to "turn a corner" as we proceed to mid-year. As always, the accomplishments of the Society are significantly due to the dedication and efforts of a number of loyal members. We also look forward to a number of high-interest programs in the remainder of 2023(see the Calendar below).*

---David S. Martin, President

## COMING EVENTS

- September 12** A British Perspective from our Sister city of Barnstaple, England
- October 10** 40th anniversary celebration (play, slide show, barbershop quartet)
- November 14** A View of Historical Connections between Marstons Mills and Sandwich
- December 12** Historical view of the Crocker Family of Marstons Mills
- January 16** Historical Story of the Cape Cod Canal
- February 13** The Story of the Marstons Mills Herring Migration
- March 12** Historical Artifacts uncovered by Metal Detection

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*

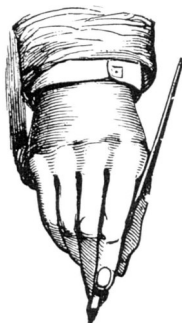
### BOOK STORE

**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**.

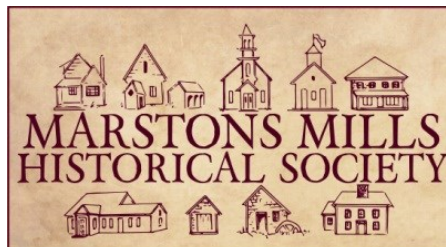
**NOTE: prices of some books have been reduced!**

**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 \$15 each.

I / we wish to renew my/our membership for 2023 at \$15 each.

I / w;e 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*

P.O. Box 1375

Marstons Mills, MA 02648

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

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

# THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION: CAPE COD AND THE ISLANDS, 1763-1783

THIS VOLUME, TO OBSERVE THE 250<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, WILL FOCUS ON EVENTS INVOLVING THE CAPE AND ISLANDS, LEADING TO INDEPENDENCE IN 1783.

The Association now seeks written essays on such topics as:

- Controversies about whether or not to seek Independence
- Heroic individual actions by Cape Codders and Islanders
- Important military and non-military events, on Cape and Islands
- Life on the Cape and Islands during the Revolutionary Period
- Lesser-known incidents which played a historical role
- Names of known Revolutionary veterans from individual Towns on Cape Cod and the Islands.

The historical time period to be covered begins with the end of the French- Indian Wars (1763) and ends with the Treaty of Paris (1783).

Anyone with an interest in developing an essay on any of these or related topics is invited to send a proposed topic to David Martin at [davidmartindr@aol.com](mailto:davidmartindr@aol.com) by July 31, 2023. Potential authors will be notified by September 1, 2023 about whether their topic has been accepted. Essays may be 3-5 single-spaced full-size pages, plus any illustrations, and the initial drafts will be due by or before December 31, 2023.

Questions and suggestions at the above address will also be appreciated.

## NEW WEBSITE

A significant accomplishment since early in the year is the establishment of a largely new and different Society website, due to the diligent work of Wendy Bierwirth, who stepped forward with the retirement of Antonia Stephens from that role after her many years of faithful and comprehensive service. Wendy has incorporated a variety of photographs along with different ways of navigating the various “nuggets” of historical information of different kinds. The changing photographic display can easily attract new users to the site. And a series of links to other history-related sites is a real boon for historical researchers. Wendy continues to welcome suggestions for changes to the website, as well as information about related upcoming events; she can be reached at [wbierwirthusa@gmail.com](mailto:wbierwirthusa@gmail.com). She is also responsible for the production of this newsletter,

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

# HEARSE LANTERNS



The Town's 1885 horse-drawn glass hearse, housed in the Hearse House at the Marstons Mills Cemetery on Route 149, is the subject of a continuing effort with the Town's Offices to be preserved at its current location so that all can view it in a condition which is close to its original state. While those efforts continue, however, member Jeffrey Crocker has conducted a thorough search to replace the hearse's missing pair of lanterns with lanterns that are representative of the period. After considerable research, he found a pair which appear to be authentic and are candle-powered, and the Society was able to purchase them at a reasonable price; they are ready to mount when the preservation process is close to comple-

tion. Anyone who would like to see the lanterns can see them at any regular Society meeting.

## TWO PROGRAMS ON CAPE COD HISTORY

The Society enjoyed two separate presentation programs on the history of Cape Cod and the Marstons Mills context. In January 2023, Dr. Jay Gitlin, Professor of History at Yale, provided an illustrated Talk on the evolution of Cape Cod from the Native peoples of pre-history, to the advent of colonists, to the growth of fishing and farming as sustenance activities, to the post-Civil War arrival of Cape Cod as a destination for visitors, to the development of Cape Cod as a true center of tourism with large hotels, and to the present day when it has become focused on second-homes and also a place for permanent retirement for many who have little or no Cape Cod roots per se. Later, for its May 2023 program, a number of Society members did a "field trip" to the Heritage Museum and Gardens in Sandwich to view the 2-year exhibit of Cape Cod History, which included a chronological display about these historical periods, with an emphasis on artifacts remaining from the Cape's history. An example is the collection of Cape Cod restaurant menus dating from the 1950's and early 1960's—a striking example is the typical \$5.00 price for a full lobster clambake (lobster, potato, corn, chowder, watermelon, etc.)



## TWO NEW HISTORICAL INTERVIEWS

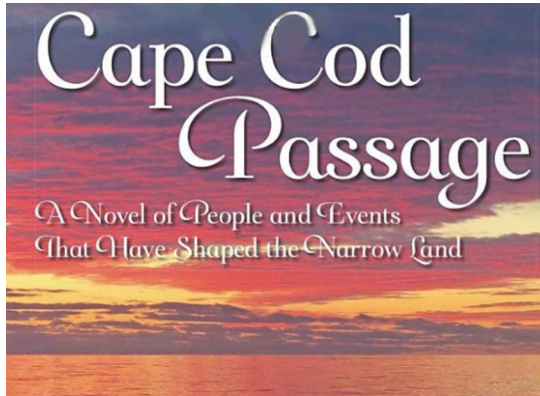


Adding to its already existing collection of 40-plus transcribed interviews with older Mills residents about their recollections, two more interviews have taken place. One has been with Jeanette Hamblin, whose late husband John, coordinated a very large cranberry-growing production in Marstons Mills along with other members of the Hamblin family. Currently those bogs, in reduced acreage, are found in the area between River Road and Santuit-Newtown Road, near the

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Homestead development (the site of the historic 1750 Isaac Crocker Farm). Jeanette's recollections provide good insights into the importance of the bogs to the local economy. The other has been with Eileen McCook Syzmanski about her youth growing up near the Burgess House on Route 149 and her familiarity with a number of residents who are no longer with us---including the late Barbara Hill, an early President of the Society. Both interview transcripts are available to be reviewed by any member by contacting Society Archivist Dianne Potter at [dpotter45@comcast.net](mailto:dpotter45@comcast.net).

## CAPE COD PASSAGE



For its March 2023 meeting, the Society enjoyed a presentation by Cape Cod author Jim Coogan about his latest book, *Cape Cod Passage*. Somewhat similar to the January and May programs which dealt with general Cape Cod History, the Coogan book focuses on key events in Cape Cod pre-history and general history. Written in what might be called the style of historical fiction, the author has woven together a series of important events in Cape history with created dialogue among the key individuals so as to “bring alive” those

people and their times. An example is two back-to-back brief chapters - one on The Patriot and the other on The Loyalist. In each case, the subject is one specific person who led others in the wrenching times surrounding the question of American Independence—one who was strongly in favor of Revolution and the other who was strongly devoted to maintaining close ties with England (the town of Barnstable was the only Cape town to NOT vote in favor of Revolution at first). The timing of the presentation was appropriate as much awareness and preparations are now being made to observe the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the American Revolution in less than three years from now. The book is available for purchase at local bookstores.

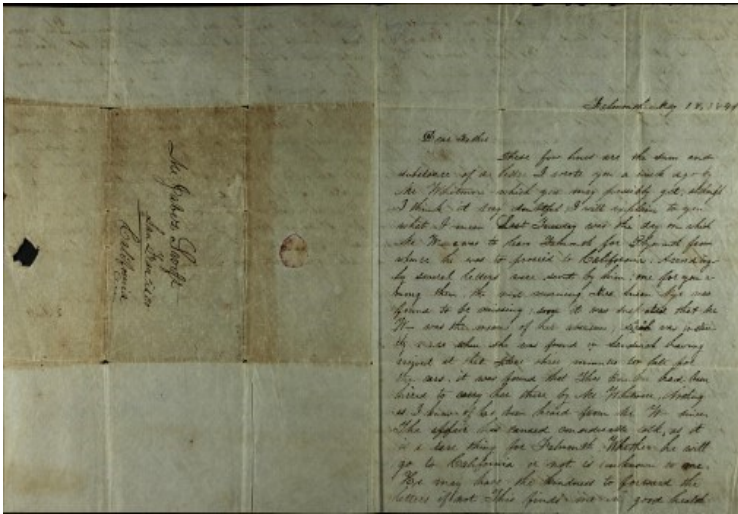
## ANNUAL MEMORIAL FLAG-PLANTING

For the second consecutive year, several Society members volunteered to participate in the Town-wide replacement of flags of all veterans' graves in the Town, and specifically in the Mills Cemetery on Route 149. Among the headstones marked were veterans of the Revolution, the Civil War, the War of 1812, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War as well as the headstones; of the 12 Revolutionary War veterans who are buried in that cemetery, which had been the subject of a grave-marking ceremony by the Sons of the American Revolution and the Society in 2020.

## A GOLD RUSH LETTER FROM FALMOUTH

For its June 2023 program, the Society learned about an authentic letter from a son in Falmouth in 1849 to his father who was mining for gold in California as part of the 1849 Gold Rush. The poignant and sometimes amusing and detailed letter gave insights into

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the challenging lives of families who were left at home while a father and husband left everything behind in search of wealth in California. The letter is close to home, from nearby Falmouth, and was shared with commentary and local color by David Martin through a powerpoint presentation. The letter was written by his great-great-grandfather and is carefully preserved for future generations to appreciate.

## PLANNING FUTURE PROGRAMS

Dianne Potter has combed through the extensive collection of items in the Society’s Archives, to identify several categories of topics upon which future presentations could be made at Society meetings in 2024. The categories include, but are not limited to, such topics as: Schools, Churches, Farming, Cranberry Bogs, Medical Care, the Airfield, the County Fair, and more. The materials upon which programs could be based include: extensive paper files, documents, maps, interviews, and a number of artifacts. The Society is seeking volunteers to provide summaries of one or another topics, using those resources. Pairs of volunteers could form “teams” to assemble summary information on any topic. David Martin and Dianne Potter will assist any interested members in the development of those summaries. Please contact them with questions or any expression of interest.

## SANDY SNEAKERS WALKS THE VILLAGE



What if there were no Marstons Mills Historical Society?

Well, we would not know Marstons Mills was founded in 1648 and was the cranberry capital of Cape Cod at one time. Or, that Benjamin Marston married Lydia Goodspeed and gave birth to Nymphas Marston in 1728; and that the huge obelisk in the Marstons Mills Cemetery is a monument to Nymphas who became a prominent figure in civil affairs and a Judge during his short lifetime of thirty years. He was so revered that a portrait of Nymphas by the infamous artist John Singleton Copley is displayed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Springfield, Massachusetts. Plus, Society members have authored books about the village.

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*The Marstons Mills Historical Society "the little society that could and did" is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2023! A special celebration is scheduled for October 10, at the Historic Burgess House, featuring an eventful program.*

The MMHS has spread its "wings" to now add the Marstons Mills Historical Society Performing Arts, with a debut table-read of the original play, SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW. To be a reader for October 10 2023, Contact [boltonslanding@comcast.net](mailto:boltonslanding@comcast.net)



It was a beautiful sight to see the West Villages Elementary School murals and painted columns at the entrance of the school. I just stopped in my tracks and stood in awe, filled with hope and inspiration knowing the children are be-



ing taught pleasant things in life that bring joy like a sweet display of a watering can with drops of inspiration.

Curious corner over here. Why is bamboo so ferociously growing on Cape Cod, and isn't there a creative use of this plant that endlessly replenishes?

...Until next time,

Sandra Bolton