



The Marston's Grist

The newsletter of the Marstons Mills Historical Society

A Farewell from our outgoing President...

Another busy late summer and fall calendar has featured several developments for the Society. The usual interesting set of program presentations has been combined with several useful discussions about future directions for the Society, as well as several non-programmatic topics. After the summer's successful participation by the Society in the Cape Cod Hydrangea Festival, the Society has looked inward. The Report of the Program Committee has been one of those features, which is contained elsewhere in this issue. For 2025, a new slate of Officers was unanimously elected at the Annual Meeting on January 14th; I am stepping down following 10 years in the President's role. The Society will now turn outward in moving toward greater attendance by the general public at its program offerings. I shall remain active in several ways and am confident that the Society will continue to grow and prosper.

—David S. Martin, President

Calendar:

- TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11** — Field Visit to Cape Verdean Museum, East Falmouth (carpooling)
- TUESDAY, MARCH 11** — Field visit to the Zion Heritage Museum, Hyannis (carpooling)
- TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2025** — Presentation on History of Town Buildings in Barnstable

CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH & S.E. MASSACHUSETTS



For one of the Society's programs in the spring of 2024 Marguerite Adams presented several fascinating stories about her ancestors who went to the Gold Rush in California after 1848. A presentation followed in the fall by David Martin. Using research by members Jeffrey Crocker and the late Vivian Cushing, David identified a number of Marstons Mills men who went to the Rush between 1849 and 1851, some having success as miners and others by working in the many businesses that sprang up at the same time. They included: Robinson Weeks who made three trips to the Gold Rush where he shod horses, repaired sluices, and sold tools to miners; Heman Thomas who, after good success out West, returned home to buy the

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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.****

2025 MMHS OFFICERS

President: Rick Presbrey

Vice-President: Freddy Kraics

Secretary: Marguerite Adams

Treasurer: Bebe Brock

Archivist: Dianne Potter

Website Mgr. & Grist Editor:

Wendy Bierwirth

Past Presidents:

David Martin, Bob Frazee &

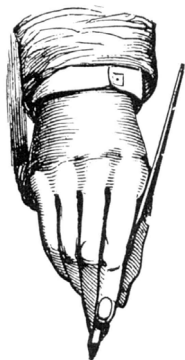
Sandra Bolton

BOOK STORE

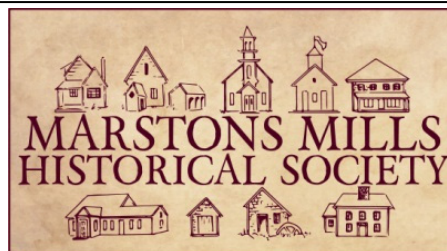
Images of America: Marstons Mills. An Arcadia Publication written by local historians James Gould and Vivian Cushing. Limited signed copies. View this publication at marstonsmillshistorical.org/publications. Available for purchase at MMPL.

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, subject line: order book.



Comments and articles for submission should be sent to 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 2025 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 2nd 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

CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH CONT'D

biggest house in the Village, owned originally by Nymphas Marston; Hiram Crocker who made two trips to the Gold Rush and later owned a dairy farm in Cotuit; and three sons of Enoch Crocker, Sr. - Alanson Crocker, who died in California, and Hiram and Benjamin Franklin Crocker who both made two trips to the Gold Rush. The ship *Eugene* carried Hiram and Benjamin Crocker to California on their first trip. It left Cotuit in November 1849, rounded Cape Horn in January 1850, and arrived in San Francisco in April 1850—after 161 days at sea. Hiram and Benjamin returned to California in 1852 via Panama—taking a ship to Panama, walking and riding across the malaria-infested isthmus, and then taking another ship from the Pacific side of Panama to San Francisco. David Martin told of his great-great-grandfather David Sisson who, like many of the gold explorers, went by ship to Central America, then walked or rode pack animals across the Isthmus of Panama through mosquito-borne jungle, to then board another ship on the Pacific side, headed for San Francisco. Dave's family has kept some samples of the gold that his ancestor brought back to his home of New Bedford, MA and these were on display—a melted nugget weighing several ounces, a stickpin, some gold dust in a glass tube, and a piece of quartz showing flecks of gold. David's other great-great-grandfather, Jabez Swift from Falmouth, MA, also went to the Gold Rush and died there without success.

THE 1885 HEARSE



The major town-owned artifact (other than the Burgess House) which is stored in Marstons Mills is the 1885 horse-drawn glass hearse, housed in the also-historic Hearse House in the cemetery on Route 149. A multi-year effort by the Society to advocate for its preservation is still ongoing. A meeting with representatives of the Town has determined that funding will be sought now to upgrade the Hearse House with electricity so that light, heat, and air-conditioning can be installed -- to prevent deterioration and promote preservation of the vehicle. Separate funding will be sought for preservation of the hearse itself in terms of replacing curtains, reconditioning of the leather, and other related parts which are showing the aging process but which are fundamentally sound and require saving. The Town also proposes that some provision be made for occasional public display of the hearse. The Society has purchased replacement period lanterns for the hearse and has identified \$1000 to contribute to the preservation project. The project is expected to continue for the better part of two years, and the Society will be kept up-to-date on the progress.

HISTORIC STRUCTURES OF THE TOWN



Bob Frazee, Society member and Chair of the Barnstable Historical Commission, provided an important and comprehensive update on the preservation of historic structures throughout the Town of Barnstable. With illustrated examples of past historic structures that have been the victim of demolition as well as others which have been saved, he outlined policies and procedures which are designed to preserve structures built as recently as 75 years ago, and going back into the 17th century. He noted the pressures of real estate development and owners' interests in reconstruction or modernization as being forces that can sometimes work against preservation. The Commission works diligently to prevent demolition of historically significant buildings. Policies which will encourage owners to find ways to preserve structures are needed in many places in the country, including Cape Cod. Timing is essential so as to start preservation in advance of deterioration. Bob also described the important process of recording historic structures with the State Historical Commission (and in some cases with the National Register). An example of the State Form, known as Form B for the Massachusetts Historical Commission, is the Prince House on Prince Avenue, pictured above; the remaining pages of the multi-page form, which include a list of all prior owners, the architecture of the building, the materials used in the building, a map showing its precise location in the Mills, as well as a narrative about the history of the house itself can be found on the Historical Society's website: www.MarsonsMillsHistorical.org.

2025 OFFICERS

At its January 14 meeting, the Society unanimously elected the following officers:

President—Rick Presbrey (formerly Vice-President) Secretary—Marguerite Adams
Vice-President—Freddy Kraics (program coordinator) Treasurer—Bebe Brock

PROGRAM INITIATIVES

A rich variety of program ideas was developed at a special meeting of the Program Committee in November, 2024. In addition to the programs which have already been confirmed for spring 2025 as a result of this meeting and shown in the Calendar at the start of this issue, numerous other ideas for future programs were suggested by Committee members.

These include:

- *A short flight on one of the DC-3 planes at the Airfield*
- *The Story of Cash Market*
- *History of Cape Cod Libraries*
- *4 Colonial-era Barnstable Fort Houses (remains only)*
- *The History of the Airfield*
- *Military History of Cape Cod*
- *Camp Alpine History*
- *Archeological discoveries on Cape Cod*

One change proposed by the Program Committee is opening up Talks and Presentations to the general community, through announcements at the Library, the Village Association, and other places. There seems to be no shortage of program ideas for the future. Stay tuned!