



# The Old Landing

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## President's Letter...

Despite the troubled economy this year, we were very pleased with the results of our annual Marion Antiques Show. Although the proceeds were more modest than last year's, we were grateful to have the strong support that we did. Due to the efforts of many volunteers and patrons, the event was a great success. Many thanks to all involved.

Three new Directors have joined the SHS Board this fall. We look forward to the new energy that they will bring to the Society and its many activities. Be sure to read about this talented trio within.

We have recently purchased software to transcribe the oral histories that we have been collecting from Marion's longtime residents. It is our plan to contact many of our town's knowledgeable seniors to record their memories of Marion for the Society's archives. If anyone is willing to participate in our oral history program, we encourage you to contact us at the Museum.

Our thanks go out to the many people who have stopped by with family memorabilia for donation to the Society's archives. We are diligently processing these wonderful artifacts and are planning to have our database online within the near future. At present, the Elizabeth

Tabor Library also has a portion of our database installed on its computers for residents to access at that location. Be sure to check it out during your next Library visit.

Within the next month, you will be receiving your annual membership renewal form. We hope you will continue your generous support of the Society. It is through your generosity that we are able to sustain our mission of preserving the history of our wonderful town.

Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any suggestions; we welcome your input.

Kind regards,

Judy Rosbe



*Judy and Bob Rosbe enjoy the MAS Preview Party with antiques dealer Al Walker (L)*

## 2009 Marion Antiques Show

The weekend of August 14th, 15th and 16th buzzed with the excitement of treasures sought, deals struck and collections conceived as the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Marion Antiques Show took over Tabor Academy's Fish Center. The weekend kicked off on Friday evening with a beautiful gala Preview Party, chaired by Cindy Crocker. While a steel band set the mood, guests previewed the Show's wonderful antiques as they enjoyed the raw bar and hors d'oeuvres – including a dish created especially for the event, Queen's Citrus Marinated Scallops. Additional Preview Party features included an autograph session with Brock Jobe, Jack O'Brien and Gary Sullivan, the authors of **Harbor and Home: Furniture of Southeastern Massachusetts, 1710-1850**, as well as the evening's surprise guest: a human topiary. The Show continued on Saturday and Sunday, as almost 700 patrons visited the 60+ dealers displaying unique items ranging from oriental carpets to vintage beds to French faience. Sunday's guests enjoyed a bonus event: a presentation by Eden Landscapes' Steve Gonsalves, who demonstrated how to create floral arrangements using antiques and attic treasures. Steve and his Eden Landscapes crew also created the stunning landscape design that graced the entrance to the Show. We are tremendously grateful to our many volunteers – especially event chairs Trudy Kingery and Charlie Bascom – for their enormous contributions of time and energy, and to the many patrons who donated so generously, even in this time of financial difficulty and uncertainty. Through everyone's hard work and goodwill, the 2009 Marion Antiques Show was a great success. This will allow the Historical Society, in turn, to contribute generously to the construction of a beautiful new bandstand for Island Wharf Park. We look forward to seeing the hard work of our volunteers and patrons result in good works within our local community.



*MAS Co-Chairs Trudy Kingery and Charlie Bascom meet Friday evening's surprise guest*



*Preview Party Chair Cindy Crocker and her husband, Doug, greet the human topiary*

- 1 lb. bay scallops
- 3 limes
- 3 tablespoons basil, chiffonade
- 1 teaspoon crushed pink peppercorns
- 3 tablespoons orange juice
- ¼ cup mango, diced
- ¼ cup red onion, diced

### QUEEN'S CITRUS MARINATED SCALLOPS

*Juice the limes. Mix lime juice and scallops together and allow to marinate in the refrigerator for 20 minutes. Add orange juice, red onion and mango; stir to mix. Serve on chilled plates. Top with basil chiffonade. (Serves 5 as an appetizer)*

## SHS Board Welcomes Three New Directors

We're delighted to announce the appointment of several individuals to our Board of Directors:

A resident of Marion since 2001, Dr. Sally Conkright comes to us with an extensive corporate and consulting background. Most recently, Sally served as VP of Administration and Chief HR Officer for Scientific Games Corporation. She has worked in the higher education field, as well, having served as an Adjunct Professor in the MBA program at Boston University and as an instructor in the Executive Education, MBA and undergraduate programs at Babson College.

Terry Lee is the President of Exari Systems, a contract automation software company in Boston's Back Bay. Though a summer resident of Marion for several decades, he has called it home year-round for the past 7 years, and lives in the village with wife Kym and sons TJ and Matthew. Since moving to town, Terry has become quite active in civic activities, serving on the Planning Board for three years and assisting with technology updates for Marion's Town House.

Lisa Whitney joins the Board with outstanding fine arts expertise and experience. As owner of Whitney Antique Prints, she specializes in 19th and 20th century decorative prints with an emphasis on early botanicals. Prior to founding her company, Lisa was a gallery director for Lepore Fine Arts on Boston's North Shore. Proud mom to Georgie and Ellie, Lisa has lived in Marion since 2000.

## Oral History Workshop Covers Recording Basics

On October 8, SHS representatives Judy Rosbe, Tess Cederholm, Lisa Whitney and Kim Teves attended an oral history workshop sponsored by UMass Dartmouth's Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese-American Archives and the Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture. The workshop's featured speaker was Dr. Betty Hoffman, President of the New England Association of Oral History. An anthropologist by training, Dr. Hoffman has extensive experience in researching and recording local history, and her credits include the acclaimed *Witness to War: 1941-1945: The Soviet Jewish Experience*, among other projects. She offered an informative introduction to the many facets of oral history project management, from planning to interview techniques to equipment to legalities. SHS participants in the workshop came away a strong sense of the principles and techniques of oral history collection and preservation, and a renewed commitment to the SHS Oral History Project, which documents the lives of long-time Marion residents. To recommend Project interviewees (or informants, as Dr. Hoffman called them), please call the SHS office at (508)748-1116 or contact the Oral History Project coordinator, Tess Cederholm or SHS President, Judy Rosbe.

### Artifacts Sought

As always, we welcome donations of items pertaining to historical Marion. At this time, our Curator, Pete Smith, is specifically in search of photos or information pertaining to:

- Kittansett Club's use by the U.S. military during WWII
- Gateway Bus line (operating between Mattapoisett and Buzzards Bay)
- Silvershell Beach before 1953
- The Hornet's Nest (neighborhood store at intersection of Converse and Lewis)
- Postcards of the fire station on South Street
- Sippican Hotel prior to its final addition

## Sippican and the Saint

Over one hundred years after his death, a prominent member of Marion's Golden Age summer crowd has made his way back to the national news. Famed sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens (whose works include Boston's Robert Gould Shaw Memorial and Chicago's standing Lincoln) first came to town in the summer of 1887, at the invitation of friends Helena de Kay and Richard Watson Gilder. The artist found Marion to be a delightful place to work, and spent his days sketching and sculpting in Mrs. Gilder's Spring Street studio, known today as the Old Stone Studio. Twenty years after his Marion summer sojourn, Augustus Saint-Gaudens would – quite literally – carve his place in U.S. history.

In 1907, Saint-Gaudens created what is often considered to be the most beautiful coin ever produced. This \$20 piece – known as the Double Eagle or \$20 Saint – was the last gold piece struck by the U.S. government for regular issue. Designed by the sculptor at the request of President Theodore Roosevelt (the artist had previously designed Roosevelt's inaugural medallion), the magnificent piece pays stylistic homage to the coins of ancient Greece. The ultra-high relief design features an image of Lady Liberty on the obverse and a flying eagle on the reverse. Unfortunately, though he was able to see proof specimens that were struck in early 1907, Saint-Gaudens died of cancer before production of the regular issue coins began in November of that year.

Though beautiful, the original Double Eagle proved impractical. The ultra-high relief design was both difficult to produce (each coin required at least five blows of the press to create its extraordinary detail) and difficult for bankers to stack, so it was discontinued after a production run of approximately 11 thousand coins. A flat relief redesign was deemed necessary, and as Saint-Gaudens was deceased, the U.S. Mint's Chief Engraver, Charles Barber, was charged with the task. Barber lowered the relief on the design to enable high-speed minting of the issue. Production of these flat relief Double Eagles began in late

1907 and continued through 1933. Their dates used Arabic numerals, rather than the Roman numerals (MCMVII) of the 1907 high relief issues. Given Saint-Gaudens' death and the coin's redesign, the original 1907 version soon became highly collectible. Beyond the elements of relief and date styles that clearly distinguished the original Saint-Gaudens design was the fact that it lacked the phrase, "In God We Trust". This motto, though required by an 1866 law on most U.S. coinage, was one to which Roosevelt strongly objected. At the President's specific request,

Saint-Gaudens had omitted the motto from his design. In 1908, Congress superseded President Roosevelt, upholding the law and requiring that "In God We Trust" be included on all coins produced thereafter.

The Double Eagle owes its renown to another circumstance, as well: the Great Depression. In 1933, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 6102, essentially outlawing private ownership of any gold coin, bullion and certificates (beyond an aggregate \$100 face value) and ending production of gold coins. Though almost half a million Double Eagles had already been minted that year, they were never officially released from the U.S. Mint at Philadelphia. Two of the coins were given to the U.S. National Numismatic Collection

at the Smithsonian Institute, and the rest were set to be melted down. That, apparently, did not go as planned. Many believe that a Mint cashier named George McCann illegally swapped approximately 20 of the 1933 Double Eagles for those of earlier production, and that some of these coins came into the possession of Israel "Izzy" Switt, a Philadelphia jeweler, who then sold at least 9 of them to private collectors.

During the 1940's and 50's, those nine coins were recovered by surrender or confiscation. A tenth had somehow been legally purchased and exported by Egypt's King Farouk in 1944, and had fallen out of sight after Farouk's political ousting in 1952. The Farouk coin

*(Cont. on Page 5)*



*Saint-Gaudens modeling a portrait of Mrs. Cleveland in the Old Stone Studio in 1887*

*(Cont. from Page 4)*

finally made its way back to the States in 1996 with its newest owner, British coin dealer Stephen Fenton. By then considered illegal to possess, the coin was seized by the Secret Service during an attempted sale, and Fenton was arrested. After considerable legal maneuvering, the coin was eventually released to him and auctioned in 2002, the proceeds split between Fenton and the U.S. government. Fetching almost \$7.6 million from an anonymous buyer, it became the world's most valuable coin, its exact whereabouts currently unknown.

This treasure tale did not go unnoticed by Israel Switt's heirs. Curious about the possible existence of more coins within the late Switt's belongings, his daughter, Joan Switt Langbord, and grandsons, David and Roy Langbord, decided to investigate. Their curiosity proved most fruitful. In a safe belonging to Israel Switt were what appeared to be 10 additional 1933 Saint-Gaudens coins. Wanting to authenticate the coins, the Langbords took them to the U.S. Mint in 2004. The coins were, indeed, authenticated, then immediately seized by the government, because they were considered stolen property of the U.S. Mint. Believing the seizure to be wrongful, the Langbords engaged Fenton's former attorney, Barry Berke, to represent them in a case against the government. In August of this year, a U.S. District Court ruled the seizure illegal, on the grounds that the government had not definitively proven that the Switt coins were stolen. Burke contends that, in fact, Israel Switt could have acquired the coins legally, in a bullion-for-coins exchange program sponsored by the Mint in the early 30's. Though technically possible – Switt was known to have participated in the exchange program – it seems unlikely, as Switt was also known to be a gold bootlegger, selling gold coins after it was declared illegal, and the exchange program was repealed just 3 weeks after the first 1933 Double Eagles were minted.

While the fate and ultimate value of these 10 Saint-Gaudens coins has yet to be determined, the fact of their existence lends more excitement and prominence to the SHS Museum's newest addition: a 24-karat reproduction of the original 1907 Double Eagle design. Produced exclusively by the United States Mint in 2009, this reproduction uses digital and laser technologies to bring Saint-Gaudens' original vision back to life, marrying the Mint's New Age innovation with the sculptor's Golden Age artistry. Be sure to stop by and see our version of the beautiful Saint-Gaudens creation at the center of this international intrigue.

## The John Bates Diary Collection

*Quite frequently, individuals come to the Museum with a question regarding a person or place in Marion's history. We have a variety of obvious resources to which we turn in our search for answers: the steel-trap memory of our curator, Pete Smith; the series of Marion books penned by SHS Board President, Judy Rosbe; the many other volumes within our SHS reference library and our database, PastPerfect. One little-known gem of a reference is the John Bates Diary Collection. This soup-to-nuts repository of information offers a personal perspective on a half-century of Marion's history. Bates' original collection included 143 volumes. Though ten of the volumes were sold to an outside collector, SHS was able to acquire the remaining 133, which are comprised of almost 40,000 fact-filled pages. In addition to the original diaries, themselves, we have converted and now maintain in our database almost 4,500 of Bates' diary and newspaper entries. Below, our database specialist Ann Harris, who spent several years analyzing and converting the diaries, provides a little background on this big collection.*

On March 24, 1892, William and Hattie (Faunce) Bates had a son, whom they named John Henry. In January of 1908, at the age of 15, John began keeping a diary. He kept at it for almost 52 years, documenting the weather and history of Marion as he experienced it.

Technically speaking, it was more of a scrapbook than a diary, as John also included outside sources. In addition to his own observations, there are photographs (of hurricane damage and buildings that were being razed) and newspaper clippings (of births, deaths and marriages, as well as scholastic, religious, political and social happenings). His entries reflect both a small, simple town and a large, complex world. Bates lived through and documented major events like Marion's Centennial, World Wars I & II, rationing and civil defense drills, and more minor changes like the emergence of dial telephones and the ending of the Onset-to-New Bedford electric cars. Economic trends are evident, as well, demonstrated in the food prices included in John's grocery shopping lists. Even Marion's physical layout is covered (and John's talent for illustration on display) in a number of hand-drawn Village street maps showing both residential and commercial landscaping and building locations and ownership.

One entry, in particular, must have pleased John: a newspaper article entitled, "Road to Fame, Keep a Diary and Historians Will Acclaim Your Insight". Item 2 of the list reads, "Keep a diary. Then later generations will honor you, not for your great personal deeds but because your shrewd insight has given the real inside story of your time." How true!

John passed away on April 21, 1965 at the age of 73. He is buried in the Evergreen Cemetery with his parents.



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## New Technology Provides Virtual Safety Net

It comes as no surprise that the vast majority of our holdings are what would be considered antiques. The methods by which we record, quantify, track them down and back them up, however, are decidedly 21<sup>st</sup> century. Though the Society still gathers and maintains 'hard copies' of newspaper clippings, photographs, paper documents, etc., we also preserve these items and images digitally, by scanning or photographing them for storage in our electronic files or database, PastPerfect. Archivists agree that the primary value of most documents and photographs lies within the image and information contained, not the item, itself. To the extent that we ensure the preservation and accessibility of that information, we maintain its value.

The antiquity of the items within our archives makes them essentially irreplaceable. Though we have created the appropriate physical storage conditions with controlled temperature, humidity, light exposure and security, there is always some level of vulnerability. That vulnerability exists for our data, as well, so it is vital that we create the appropriate virtual storage conditions for our electronic files and database, protecting against the possibility of damage to our computer or to the valuable data it contains. To accomplish this, we have turned to Vault USA, a business continuity tool for online data backup and disaster recovery. Founded by Marion resident Tom Gelson, a leader in the data storage industry, the Vault USA system allows individuals and businesses to store crucial data securely offsite and out of harm's way. Our data is encrypted and then vaulted both here at the Museum and to a Data Recovery Center. We can now archive, run backups and access our data anytime and anywhere, without having to rely on discs, flash drives or other media that are subject to loss, failure or obsolescence. The Society is very grateful for this convenient new technology and the peace of mind it provides. Our thanks to Tom Gelson for sharing it with us.