



## ORLEANS HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

OrleansHistoricalSociety.org  
3 River Road, P.O. Box 353, Orleans, MA 02653  
508-240-1329

*By bringing history and culture to life, the Orleans Historical Society will inspire a shared sense of community and pride in the rich heritage of the Town of Orleans.*

*SPRING 2017*

### MEETINGHOUSE IN 'EXCELLENT' CONDITION, PRESERVATION CONSULTANT SAYS

A February, 2017 inspection of the Orleans Historical Society (OHS) 1834 Meetinghouse by a nationally recognized preservation consultant showed that “most [physical] elements are in excellent condition, particularly the structure of the building.” A similar study of the adjacent Hurd Chapel indicated that, while the exterior shingle siding was in “good repair,” the roof and front door area needed replacement in the near future.

Fred Ecker, founder of Tidewater Preservation, Inc. and a Yarmouth Port resident, was hired to help OHS determine next steps in improving the Meetinghouse and making it more useful and accessible. Funding for the consultant came from the Town through a Community Preservation grant. Ecker noted that the “structure as a whole exhibits a positive state of preservation,” reflecting OHS’ ongoing commitment to maintaining and restoring the Meetinghouse. However, his inspection also highlighted the building’s shortcomings as a multi-use facility.

Considering that the building is on the National Register of Historic Places, the alterations that would be required to create an adequate climate-controlled space for museum artifacts and archives would jeopardize the registration, Ecker said. The most suitable use for the structure is its original design use – a space for presentations and meetings for the general public.

For that purpose he noted improvements that should be made to the Meetinghouse to create a handicap access and bathroom; update the heating ductwork, emergency lighting, fire protection and other mechanical systems; and securing loose floorboards. In addition, he recommended restoration projects such as replacing the front doors with historically accurate reproductions, adding external louvered shutters on windows and replacing the poured concrete platform outside the main entrances with a new slab covered with period stonework.



*View from the corner of River Rd. and School St. of Hurd Chapel (left) with Meetinghouse in background.*

The Hurd Chapel, built in the Orleans Cemetery in the 1930s and donated to OHS some 40 years later, is a one-story, wood-frame structure where extra exhibit panels, tables/chairs and other items currently are stored. It has minimal electrical service, no plumbing, and lacks proper air circulation that exposes contents to heat and humidity extremes. Ecker suggested that the Chapel could easily be repaired and moved onto a proper foundation with a basement. If adequate mechanical systems were added, it could provide more usable space.

Throughout his 31-year-career, Ecker and his company have worked on more than 300 historic properties specializing in the restoration and preservation of 18th and 19th century house museums, religious structures, and historical public and private residences, among others. Many of these properties are designated as National Historic Landmarks or are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Past and current projects include The White House in Washington, D.C., Mount Vernon and Monticello in Virginia, and the Edith Wharton Estate in Massachusetts.

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## Letter from the Board Chair

Spring 2017

Recently a study was completed regarding our reputation in the community and our expansion plans, and I want to share some results — and my initial thoughts about them. The study involved in-depth interviews with a small subset of OHS members/donors by a non-partial consultant. Most of the interviews took place late last Fall, with a few carrying over into early this year. The consultant then summarized the key points made by participants and presented them (anonymously) to us, adding recommendations and conclusions.

I was pleased to learn that participants were very familiar with OHS, and almost all had attended at least one of our programs. They understood our mission to preserve the history and culture of Orleans, saw our value to the community, and were committed to our success and sustainability. In addition, a large majority of participants understood our need for more space and making reasonable improvements to our Meetinghouse and Hurd Chapel (the small building in front of the Meetinghouse on School Street).

The study indicated some areas for improvement, too. While a minority of participants cited concerns about our future direction, membership growth and financial management, all felt OHS could benefit from a stronger image and better awareness of our operations and programs. This is great feedback and, clearly, we need to remember the “basics” that drive our organization before we charge ahead with major expansion efforts. We certainly will work harder to improve in these areas. At the same time, when opportunity knocks I’ve always believed you should at least open the door.

To that point, most of the interviews in this study were done before the owners of The Captain Linnell House approached us in late December about possibly buying the property in 3-5 years. So we don’t know if this development might have affected the results. Still the Board feels strongly that Linnell House could provide much-needed museum and preservation space for us — plus an additional event venue with *revenue potential*. We have much work to do in determining the feasibility of this purchase, and we should have a clearer picture of our next steps by mid-year.

The OHS Board and I are more excited than ever about the future, and we’ll keep in mind the important points of this study as we move forward. We hope you share our optimism, and look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,

Mark Carron

## Wish List

**Are you a woodworker looking for a small project?** OHS needs a volunteer to make a couple of small wooden signs to hang on our lamppost saying “concert today,” “speaker today,” and “tour today.”

If you can help, please contact Nancy at 508-240-1329 or [admin@orleanshs.org](mailto:admin@orleanshs.org). Thank you!

**WORLD WAR I ATTACK ON ORLEANS, TOWN BASEBALL TEAMS  
ARE FOCUS OF TWO UPCOMING MEETINGHOUSE EXHIBITS**

Researched by David Drabkin, OHS Volunteer

On July 21, 1918, a German submarine surfaced off Nauset beach and used its deck gun to sink several barges and damage the towboat *Perth Amboy*. Some of the shells landed onshore, making Orleans the only U.S. territory attacked during WWI. Seaplanes dispatched from Chatham Naval Air Station tried, unsuccessfully, to bomb the sub. Members of the U.S. Life Saving Service (Coast Guard) rushed to save some 30 people on the barges and tug during the attack. Crowds, reportedly nearing 1,000, gathered on the bluffs to watch the whole spectacle, experiencing warfare first-hand and realizing just how vulnerable a place Cape Cod was.

Fortunately, there were no deaths and only two injuries resulting from the 90 minutes of shelling. The U-boat left Cape Cod and headed for the Maine coast, where it continued to sink ships before it turned toward home and met its fate striking an underwater mine off the Norway coast. Ironically, the *Perth Amboy* was sold to a British company, repaired, and later participated in the World War II evacuation of troops at Dunkirk.

Now, almost 100 years later, the Orleans Historical Society is preparing an exhibit to commemorate the U-boat attack on Orleans and those Americans who fought back. The exhibit is scheduled to open at the Meetinghouse Museum in time for this summer. Other town-wide events are being planned for next year on the weekend of July 20 - 22.



Also new at the Meetinghouse this summer will be a second exhibit focused on Orleans and baseball.

*An early Orleans baseball team jersey is one of the artifacts from the OHS archives that will be on display this summer at the Meetinghouse Museum.*



*This mural depicts the artist's interpretation of the dramatic WWI submarine attack on barges and a tow-boat off Nauset beach in 1918.*

Today's Cape League is one of nearly a dozen summer leagues in the country sanctioned by the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association). While all of them are known for generating future big leaguers, none have more former players in the majors than the Cape League.

The Orleans *Firebirds* team is no exception – for example, Baseball Hall of Famer **Carlton Fisk**, catcher for the Boston Red Sox and, later, the Chicago White Sox, got his start right here in town. Yet the origin of organized baseball on the Cape goes back to the late 1800s when many towns, including Orleans, had their own teams with players of various ages (not just college students) competing with each other. The OHS exhibit will explore some of the local history of what is called “America’s favorite pastime.”

If you have archives or artifacts relating to these exhibits that you are willing to lend to OHS, please let us know. Also, volunteers are needed for the planning and assembly of the exhibits and events. Please call the Meetinghouse at 508-240-1329, or email [admin@orleanshs.org](mailto:admin@orleanshs.org) if you can help.

# ORLEANS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## HONOR ROLL OF OUR ANNUAL APPEAL CONTRIBUTORS

More than 180 Orleans Historical Society members, friends and neighbors responded to our 2017 Annual Appeal letter this spring. **THANK YOU** to everyone on the list below for their support. Yet we are only part-way to our goal of raising the necessary funds to build new exhibits (see p. 3) and sustain our summer and fall programs serving residents and visitors. **Not on the list?** It's not too late to support OHS; contributions may be made online at [OrleansHistoricalSociety.org](http://OrleansHistoricalSociety.org) or by check mailed with the form below to P.O. Box 353, Orleans MA, 02653.

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### 2017 ORLEANS HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL APPEAL

Here is my gift of:  \$500  \$250  \$100  \$50  \$25  Other

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address, City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail (We won't share/sell it) \_\_\_\_\_

*PS. Does your employer match your donations to non-profit organizations?  
You can double your impact by using your employer's donation matching program.*

## Upcoming Events: Summer 2017

### Talks and Tours

*Summer History Talk Series* has something for everyone!

Mark your calendars now to attend the series of history presentations on Wednesday evenings this summer at the OHS Meetinghouse Museum. Learn about different aspects of Cape Cod history in air-conditioned comfort. All events begin at 7 p.m.

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| June 28   | <b><i>Women in the Civil War</i></b><br>Brenda Collins                         |
| July 12   | <b><i>Cape Cod Coast Guardsmen in 1937 Flood Relief</i></b><br>Dick Ryder      |
| July 26   | <b><i>Wreck of the Whydah</i></b><br>Chris Macort                              |
| August 9  | <b><i>Fatal Decision: Edith Covell WWI Nurse</i></b><br>Terri Arthur, RN       |
| August 23 | <b><i>Cape Cod's Role in WWII</i></b><br>Joe Yuka and Jerry Ellis              |
| Sept 6    | <b><i>Rails to Trails: History of Railroads on Cape Cod</i></b><br>Jay Stradal |

Also, Bonnie Snow's popular series of historic **Cemetery Walks and Main St. Walks** return on the following Fridays from 10 a.m.– noon (start at OHS Meetinghouse):

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| July 7    | Cemetery Walk                              |
| July 12   | Main St. Walk -<br>OHS to Methodist Church |
| August 4  | Cemetery Walk                              |
| August 18 | Main St. Walk -<br>OHS to Methodist Church |
| Sept 8    | Cemetery Walk                              |
| Sept 22   | Main St. Walk -<br>OHS to Methodist Church |

*Check the Events Calendar on our website for details and other events*



### OHS BOOTH BACK AT ROCK HARBOR

Along with the CG36500 lifeboat, the OHS souvenir and information booth will be back at Rock Harbor this summer, staffed by Pattie Hamilton (daughter of Bernie Webber who was coxswain of the boat during the *Pendleton* rescue). The booth will be open June through August; check the OHS website for specific hours. Visitors may buy T-shirts, burgees, books and other items related to the CG36500 and the *Pendleton* rescue, and can obtain additional information about the lifeboat's history and "Talk & Tour" schedule.

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



*A large audience settles in for the start of author Nancy Rubin Stuart's presentation on Cape women in Revolutionary War history in March.*



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3 River Road  
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### Antiques Galore!

On **Saturday, June 17**, OHS is holding its **5th annual Antiques Show** on the front lawn of Nauset Middle School. The more than 30 quality dealers from near and far help make this one of the premier antique shows on the

Cape. Featured will be nautical items, scrimshaw, country furniture and smalls, stoneware, antique and pre-loved books, vintage glassware and pottery, early lamps, paintings and much more. The show will run from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., rain or shine, and admission is **\$5 with coupon** (right). All proceeds benefit the non-profit Orleans Historical Society. See you there!

If you would like to volunteer to help with the show, half- or full-day, please contact Beverly Fuller, 508-221-5489.

ORLEANS HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
**Antiques Show**  
on Cape Cod  
Saturday, June 17, 2017  
9 am to 3:30 pm (rain or shine)



30+ quality dealers  
Admission \$6  
\$5 per person with ad, students and children free  
On the Green at Nauset Middle School  
Route 28 at Eldredge Park Way  
Orleans MA 02653  
508-240-1329  
[www.OrleansHistoricalSociety.org](http://www.OrleansHistoricalSociety.org)  
*Proceeds benefit Orleans Historical Society, a nonprofit organization*