

# CHEQUAQUET LOG

The Newsletter of the **CENTERVILLE HISTORICAL MUSEUM** [www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org)

## THE MUSEUM'S FIRST RADIO PLAY PLUS A SHORT HISTORY LESSON

Jane Hattemer-Stringer, a museum member, theater lover and playwright, has once again brought an evening of entertainment to the museum. Previously, she had written and directed a Murder Mystery play which included audience participation that ended up being hilarious. On Friday, July 15th, Jane's subsequent original presentation proved yet another lighthearted and fun adventure.

The event, well attended, featured what is known as the "radio play." There were seven actors and one sound affects/scene describer in the ensemble. The play's location was a local one and the actors were all volunteers; some more experienced, some first-time participants. This radio play did not need a stage, lighting or costumes. All it needed, if one were listening to a radio station that featured this play, was the radio; the audience's "radio" at the museum was left to the listener's imagination.

So, on this Friday evening, the audience listened, as if to a radio, to a play presented to them in person. It was called "MURDER ON THE STEPS OF CRAIGVILLE." A story was told, with our actors seated in a semi-circle, reading their parts as if they were in front of a radio microphone. Each script sat on a music stand, each actor's voice stayed completely in character, the plot twisted one way, then turned another and the action moved on to where the tricky whodunnit was solved.

By all accounts, this style of entertainment went over very well. The audience was able to easily grasp the gist of the play and laugh or smile when appropriate as the action proceeded forward scene by scene. At the play's end, audience members stood and clapped approval. Obviously, this unique form of play and a pleasant evening went hand in hand. Bravo to the participants and to author, director and sound effects person, Jane Hattemer-Stringer.

Radio drama achieved widespread popularity within a decade of its initial development in the 1920s. By the 1940s, it was a leading international popular entertainment. With the advent of television in the

1950s, radio drama began losing its audience, though it remains popular in much of the world.

Unsung pioneers of the art include Fred Smith, Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll who popularized the dramatic serial and the Eveready Hour creative team which began with one-act plays but was soon experimenting with hour-long combinations of drama and music on its weekly variety program.

Perhaps America's most famous radio drama broadcast is Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds* (a 1938 version of H. G. Wells' novel), which convinced large numbers of listeners that an actual invasion from Mars was taking place. By the late 1930s, radio drama was widely popular in the United States. There were dozens of programs in many different genres, from mysteries and thrillers to soap operas and comedies. Among American playwrights, screenwriters and novelists who had their start in radio drama are Rod Serling and Irwin Shaw.

A cousin of the original radio drama today is the podcast, available over the internet and accessed by computer and cell phone.



# COMING EVENTS

## August 2022

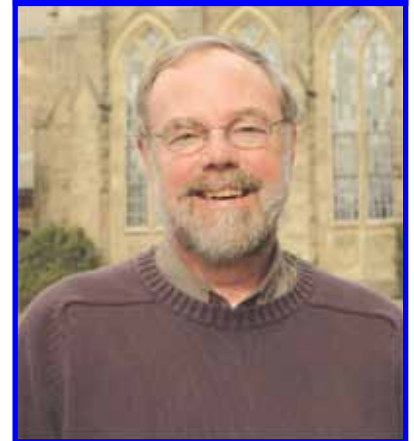
Annual Vintage Car Show, Saturday, August 13, 8AM - 2PM, free  
Arts, and Crafts Fair Sale, Saturday, August 13, 9AM - 2PM, free  
History of Craigville talk, Tuesday, August 16, 7PM, free

## September 2022

Murder Mystery Evening Fundraiser,  
Saturday, September 17, 6PM - \$50M, \$65NM

## History of Craigville talk

Author and historian, Dr. William McKinney, President of the Christian Camp Meeting Association in Craigville will give a talk on the history of Craigville. This year is the 150th anniversary of Craigville.



## Annual Vintage Car Show

The 2nd Annual Antique and Vintage car show will feature those wonderful treasures from the past. They will be on display in both the front and rear of the Recreation building and the front and rear of the museum.



## Arts, Crafts and Collectables Fair SALE!

The museum is hosting a gathering of local vendors to set up and sell their art, crafts and vintage collectables for visitors. They will be outside and inside the museum. Come see what treasures they have to offer.

ARTS,  
CRAFTS  
and  
COLLECTABLES  
FAIR

"Murder in  
Centerville's Post Office"

A MURDER  
MYSTERY  
EVENING

## Murder Mystery Evening it's happening again!

It's the 1940s and someone is found murdered in the Post Office at Henry Place and Monument Square. Everyone is shocked and baffled. The authorities once again need to call in the immutable private detective Miss Tweed and YOU to help solve the case.

There will be a sit-down dinner with accompanying libations starting at 6pm. The murder mystery follows at 7PM. Reservation required before September 10. 508/775-0331

# V O L U N T E E R P R O F I L E

## RUSHTON POTTS: A TRIBUTE TO AN ENLIGHTENED FRIEND OF THE MUSEUM

It has been a year since Rushton Potts passed away. Yet his presence, his contributions, his love and respect, both given and received, are still and will be, remembered and appreciated by those who knew him.

Rushton was a local, raised and schooled in Falmouth. He had a wide range of interests, both in sports and in his reputation as being “a brain” among those who knew him growing up. After dropping out of Boston University due to illness, he joined the Navy, then returned to the Cape to work and continue his college education until his graduation from the University.

With Cape Cod as his home, he married and with his liberal arts and varied intellectual background, began and succeeded in a variety of ventures. He owned a bookstore and a fine arts and antiques shop. He was known as a gourmet cook as well as a talented painter. All his life, interest in quality, in art, in beauty and words defined his passions. “He knew what he was looking at,” says an admirer. “He researched and sought out all sorts of things. He even made his own picture frames.”

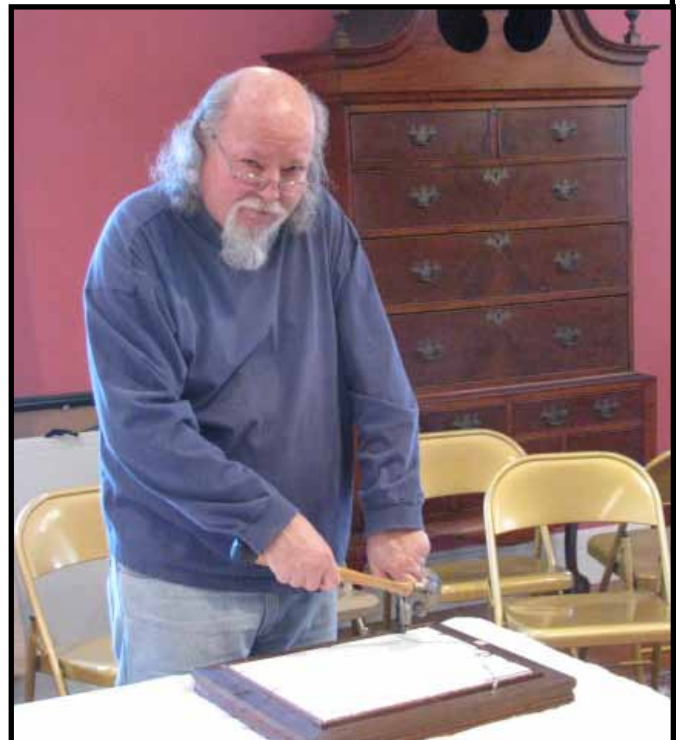
To seek his treasures, he went to auctions and was on Ebay. He sold many of his books online. He dealt in what is known as collectibles. He had consignment booths in both New Bedford and the Cape where he sold beautiful and pristine antiques, fine art and objets d’art.

In 2015, he started volunteering at Centerville Museum and soon became a respected and knowledgeable contributor. A gentle man as well as a gentleman, he was known to be outgoing, friendly, and interested in all facets of history, art and various research pursuits. His balding dome glistened atop his head and his smile was accented with a white mustache and goatee that tickled his chest when he bent his head to work on a project.

Volunteering three days a week at the museum, Rushton dived into cataloguing and organizing the many parts of the entire collection. Over the course of his time at the museum he researched, catalogued and stored over 1,500 objects and more than 3,000 photographs in computer files, which would prove a great benefit to a director, volunteer or visitor for finding information more quickly. While cataloguing, he also accurately described, evaluated and sometimes correctly dated a new or revisited object.

From the beginning, Rushton was known to gift unusually unique items to the museum, including books, pottery, a sculpture, wood blocks, over thirty 150-year-old Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblock prints, plus several other individual gifts. He even loaned an item or two to a museum’s new display to add to its presentation.

He was also an asset in other ways. He would value books for museum yard sales, check the quality or age of items, graciously reject or accept questionable contributions and keep an eye on the overall running of the day’s goings on. In retrospect, Rushton Potts had numerous talents and skills that has helped all. He offered his experience, his knowledge, his artistic eye, while being a Renaissance man whose talents strengthened what the museum needed and wanted to portray to the community, to visitors and to history.



# I N T E R E S T I N G   H I S T O R Y

## HENRY DAVID THOREAU'S CAPE COD

When Henry David Thoreau visited Cape Cod in the fall of 1849 with his friend William Ellery Channing, both had open umbrellas over their heads. They had arrived in the middle of a nor'easter. Undaunted, the two decided to proceed with their desire to walk on the beach from Eastham to Provincetown, a trudge of roughly twenty-eight miles.

Thoreau made three trips to Cape Cod during his lifetime, all before the 43,000 acres, now the Cape Cod National Seashore, was authorized as such in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy.

Thoreau and Channing were not thinking of preserving the beach and shoreline they were exploring. Their only desire was isolation and beautiful views, worthy conversation and quiet moments along the straw-colored October dunes. They wanted, "the solitude of the ocean and the desert combined." Eventually, Thoreau published his three trips to the "bared and bended arm" on the jutting coastline in a book entitled, *Cape Cod*.

The forty mile stretch of beach, now protected, was mostly deserted 170 years ago. There were what could be called shacks here and there belonging to fishermen and seasonal cranberry bog farmers. The pair came across one rough cabin inhabited by a ninety-three year old toothless woman. She wore a man's hat and smoked a pipe. Buckets outside the door carried fresh water from a well and a privy stood behind the building. She had lived in that spot all her life. Other souls met were "wreckers," who collected shipwrecked cargo, driftwood and occasionally washed-ashore bodies.

Overall, the Cape's small fishing and farming villages were on the brink of expanding due to its first railroad. The Cape Cod Branch Railroad's route, built in 1848, ran from Boston to Sandwich. Thoreau and Channing took the train and then a stagecoach to Orleans to begin their walking tour. In a way, Thoreau's journeys and book forecast change from a rural, backward and unsophisticated part of Massachusetts into the tourist mecca it is today. It would take a few decades before hotels and inns started catering to visitors and for artists to discover the Cape's pristine light. Eventually, writers sought its isolated shacks, or windy dunes, to be inspired. Playwright Eugene O'Neill was among them. Guglielmo Marconi won a Nobel Prize in physics for his two-way transatlantic telegraph from these shores.



Thoreau recorded the changing coastline of the beaches and dunes he explored. He noted how the shoreline was continuously eroding here and building there. He wrote, "Beaches are here made and unmade in a day by the sea shifting its sands." He also collected plant specimens and carried them in a special shelf on his brimmed hat.

Today Cape Cod National Seashore's vast area is a mix of public, private and municipal property within its boundaries. It is managed by park staff, towns and a slew of stakeholders. Old shacks which were slated for demolition were saved when a campaign to save the dwellings created a historic district to protect the buildings and their surrounding land.

Thoreau and Channing took a steamer back to Boston from Provincetown after their journey. On his return to Concord, Thoreau wrote, "I seemed to hear the sea roar, as if I lived in a shell, for a week afterward." He also said, "The sea is the most advantageous point to contemplate the world," something that many before and since Thoreau have done.

# T H O U G H T S F R O M O U R W R I T E R

## AUNTIE LOIS WATCHES OVER HER OSPREY NESTS ON THE WAY TO THE MUSEUM

I confess. I check on Osprey nests on my weekly trek to the museum. In the spring, my eyes look up longingly to see if these amazing creatures have returned. When all are in place and their nests have been rebuilt, mostly with sticks, it is noteworthy to watch mom and pop Osprey stand at attention, fly off for some dinner at the local watering hole, or peak at the top of mom's head as she nests over her eggs.

When the one to four eggs hatch, it is mom's job to keep them warm and it is dad's job to catch the meals. Weeks go by, usually six or seven, and the tops of smaller heads can be seen, edging toward the rim of the nest, being encouraged to take off and soar a little bit before returning to safety. Then, one day, only the mated pair are left. The youngsters have departed to search for their dinner and a mate, to repeat the traditional life of this wonderful raptor, to build a new home, fish and start a new family.

Ospreys can live almost anywhere except Antarctica. They find their lifelong mates and nest as near to water as can be. They can build a nest in a tree or on a pole. On the Cape they do like electric company poles, though there is an ongoing war going on between bird and the electric company over what can be put on top of those poles.

For instance, a year ago, tired of having to clear off one nest, and there is a good reason, for a bird nest can cause electrical outages across the Cape, the pole top was cleared and a black rectangular box was placed atop the electric pole. Never fear, Mr. and Mrs. Osprey had none of that. A little messy it may be, but a rebuilt nest rests comfortably over the black box and mother bird is currently watching her babies thrive and dad is going to and fro to feed fish to them.

Ospreys, also known as Fish Hawks, Sea Hawks and River Hawks, are not overly large. They have brown, black and white coloring on their bibs, backs and wings. They also have five-foot wingspans and a funny little outer talon that is extra good at catching fish, the only food they eat. They can live 15 to 20 years and always return to the same nest. When they leave the nest for the winter, they fly thousands of miles. Mexico and South America are two popular places to vacation until spring, when the return trip to the north begins.



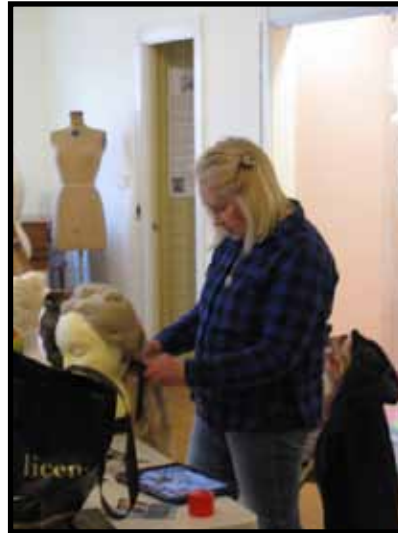
Osprey nests are increasing, though at one time, the species was in great peril. Newly hatched eggshells in the 1950's and 1960's, became increasingly thin.

The cause was traced to the use of pesticides such as DDT, which was eventually banned.

Well, you can see why one can be captivated by these fascinating birds. Seeing the nests and being able to view several months of Osprey life, mostly within plain view, is a delightful sight to behold. It does not take much to please Auntie Lois, but this does, most nicely.

*From the deck of newsletter writer Lois Lane*

COME VOLUNTEER at the MUSEUM



# **museum volunteering**

- Lectures*
- Lunches*
- Exhibits*
- Collections*
- Conservation*
- Gallery Talks*
- Workshops*
- Social Media*
- Fundraising Events*
- Museum Trips*
- Research*
- Silent Auction*
- Volunteer Lunches*
- Education Programs*
- Museum Guides*
- Website*



*do you have a talent or interest? we have a place for you*

# PHILANTHROPY

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and ask you, our members, to support these businesses that support us.**

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