

REHOBOTH ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Carpenter Museum
Blanding Library
Goff Memorial Hall
Arts in the Village
Cultural Events



RAS Newsletter

2020 SPEAKER SERIES CONTINUES

The Carpenter Museum's first Speaker Series guest, Rev. Charles Hartman, shared the story of John Myles, a central figure in early Baptist development in Plymouth Colony. His one-hour lecture entitled, *A Lapse of Memory: Exploring the Narrative of the Swansea Baptists*, reviewed the 17th century history of England in which the Protestant Church was split by a variety of groups, including the Separatists who left England in 1620 to settle in Plymouth. He went on to describe the history of the Newman Congregational Church in Rehoboth (now East Providence) and the split led by John Browne, James Brown, Thomas Willet and others who formed the first Baptist Church in Massachusetts at Nockum Hill, now in Barrington, RI.



In September, the Museum hosted Dr. David Weed, who presented *The Untold Story of the Sowams Heritage Area*. Also in September, Cherry Fletcher Bamberg held a Zoom lecture on the Turbulent Times in Early Rehoboth: Obadiah Holmes and his Baptist Friends. Look for videos of these presentations as well as upcoming lectures on our website.



Hurry and reserve your spot! Visit our website at:
rehobothantiquarian.org/carpenter-museum/2020-speaker-series

UPCOMING MUSEUM EVENTS



REHOBOTH MILKMAIDS EXHIBIT and INSTALLATION NOW OPEN

The Museum is open the 1st Saturday of the month and every Tuesday and Thursday from 1 to 4 p.m.

SPEAKERS SERIES

October 2020

Portuguese Rehoboth: What History and Archives Can Teach Us

November 2020

Archaeology Along the Palmer River

For dates, times and registration information, please visit

RehobothAntiquarian.org/carpenter-museum/2020-speaker-series.

ARTISANS SHOW

Coming Back November 2021

ARTS IN THE VILLAGE CONCERT SERIES

Coming Back in 2021

rehobothantiquarian.org

LOOKING BACK FOUR CENTURIES:

Planning and the Journey to Plymouth

By Rebecca Smith, RAS President

Despite what visiting school children sometimes think, Rehoboth was not established by the Mayflower Pilgrims. Our beginnings as a town did come under the auspices of Plymouth Colony, however, and many who came on the *Mayflower* in 1620, as well as many of the original settlers who arrived with Rev. Samuel Newman in 1643, have descendants living in town today. It is fascinating to reflect on the four centuries of immigration that have gone into making our hometown.

We note 1620 as the year the Mayflower Pilgrims arrived in what is now Plymouth, Massachusetts, but they actually arrived late in the year. In the early months of 1620, the momentous voyage was barely in the planning stages.

The congregation of religious separatists led by John Robinson had fled persecution in England to settle in Leiden, a tolerant city in the Netherlands, a dozen years earlier. These future Pilgrims found employment and some bought property. Several of them became citizens. Church elder William Brewster taught Latin and operated a printing press.

By 1619, however, Leiden no longer seemed a perfect refuge. The Roman Catholic Spanish were poised to invade the Netherlands and bring in the Inquisition, and William Brewster was in hiding after printing a book critical of England's King James. Now the group wanted their own space and had begun seeking a way to cross the Atlantic. For the past year, they had been negotiating with the Virginia Company in London; by early 1620, they were also being recruited by the New Netherlands Company, which wanted to establish its own foothold in the New World. Meanwhile, everyday life went on as everyone wondered where they might be in a year's time.

As William Bradford and others sold their Leiden property to raise money for the voyage, the Dutch States General decided against supporting the New Netherlands project. Falling back on the disorganized Virginia Company didn't work out either, and the separatists began working with puritan-connected Thomas Weston, whose company of Merchant Adventurers had already obtained a patent for settlement in northern Virginia (now New Jersey). As negotiations dragged on through the spring of 1620, the Pilgrims' agent Robert Cushman was no match for the smooth-talking London businessman and his associates.

The Leiden congregation was unhappy with delays, poor communication, and what they saw as unreasonable conditions in the contract, but the sailing season was rapidly disappearing and they wanted to make a move. By the end of June, plans were in place to transport approximately 150 people in two ships. Along with part of Robinson's congregation, passengers would include other separatists from the Low Countries and England as well as some included for business reasons, and the remaining church members would follow in the next few years.

In July, those who were leaving Leiden traveled to Delftshaven, where the newly-purchased *Speedwell* awaited them. They hoped to arrive in "northern Virginia" with time to settle in before winter. Crossing to Southampton, they met with the *Mayflower*, which had been hired for the voyage, and with the other passengers. After some further delays, the ships finally set sail on the fifth of August. Only 75 miles along the coast, they put in to the port of Dartmouth for repairs to the *Speedwell*, which was leaking. After

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MUSEUM DOORS ARE OPEN

Danielle DiGiacomo, Director Carpenter Museum

The Carpenter Museum doors are open once again! It wasn't the spring or summer we were hoping for, and our fall will look a little different, but our museum and research center doors are once again open to the public every Tuesday and Thursday 1-4 PM.

We worked hard while you were away. We continued to care for Rehoboth's artifact and archival collections while we made new safety measures to keep visitors and staff safe. We've updated our website to include at home social studies lessons that meet Massachusetts standards, we planned a speaker series that is well underway, and lastly, we took down an old exhibit and replaced it with a completely new one.

Our latest exhibit installation, *Play Ball! The Rehoboth Milkmaids: Pioneers of Women's Softball*, is open now! This exhibition focuses on the early adoption of softball in the Rehoboth area, and chronicles the team's journey through its 1938-1941 seasons. The Museum's website features a digital version of the exhibit if you cannot visit in person as well as accompanying learning materials that explore the role sports has played in the history of Rehoboth and beyond.

If you can come in to see us we welcome you back. Please wear a mask and limit your group size to 4 people. We can't wait to see you!



THANK YOU

*Going above and beyond this year are volunteers
Dennis Mello and
Rachel Smith.*

When a creature

burrowed beneath the front of the Carpenter Museum, it caused the granite step to tilt and become a safety hazard. Dennis and Rachel came to the rescue and fixed our step. Many thanks!

2020 RAS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT ANNOUNCED

The Rehoboth Antiquarian Society is pleased to announce our 2020 scholarship recipient. This year's second semester scholarship will be awarded to Elizabeth Ulrich of Somerset, MA. Elizabeth is a graduate of Westfield State University. She has also earned a Master's Degree in Creative Writing and Publishing from Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland. Currently, Ms. Ulrich is enrolled in a master's degree program at Valdosta State University where she hopes to complete her Master's Degree in Library and Information Science in the spring of 2022.

Elizabeth is a full-time librarian at the Fall River Public Library where, among her many duties, she assists library patrons with their applications for U.S. passports as a certified Passport Acceptance Program agent. The RAS Board and Scholarship Committee look forward to presenting the \$1,000 scholarship to Elizabeth during her semester break in December.

The RAS Scholarship Committee will begin a search for a 2021 scholarship recipient in January when information and an application will be posted on the RAS website. We encourage students accepted by, or enrolled in, a post-secondary program related to museum or library studies to apply. This may include museum or library science, history, archeology, anthropology, conservation, restoration, preservation, etc. We encourage students enrolled in any of these programs to consider applying for this award.

COVID-19 CANCELLATIONS

Due to Covid-19, the **Artisans Show** scheduled for November 2020 has been cancelled. You can still support your local crafters by purchasing directly from our talented Artisan Show Vendors. **Contact information for the Vendors can be found on the RAS website.** The 2020-2021 season of Arts in the Village concerts has also been cancelled and will resume when it is safe.

BLANDING LIBRARY

GOFF MEMORIAL HALL

Whitney Pape, Director Blanding Public Library

If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught me anything, it's how much nourishment we absorb from other humans. In my case, literally, since the shutdowns and stay-at-home orders coincided with a kitchen renovation. If I wanted a hot meal requiring more sophisticated preparation than reheating in a microwave oven in the one microwave-safe cereal bowl that I hadn't packed away for the cabinet demolition, I relied upon the handful of restaurants near me that offered curbside service. We all relied on grocery store workers taking personal health risks to make sure we had access to the food we needed to survive.

Having taken care of basic survival needs, the nourishment I missed the most was the emotional and intellectual nourishment derived from interacting with patrons and coworkers. It was strange to spend time at the empty, locked library, periodically checking on the building, the mail, items returned in our book drop, and returning voicemail and email messages. The life, the vitality, the warmth were all gone, and in their place remained worries about keeping town members and staff safe once we were allowed to reopen.

Reopening the library's doors to the people of Rehoboth has been the sweetest salve for the worries that plagued us all spring. Harboring others' souls--albeit briefly--has brought life and purpose back to the building and the staff, and brings us a taste of pre-COVID days.

Things are a little bit different at the library--everyone wears a mask and visits are somewhat abbreviated. But seeing the members of our community after such a long absence most definitely nourishes our spirits.

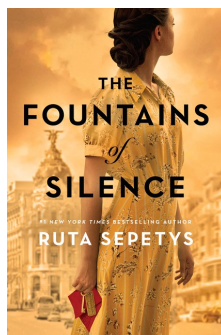
Welcome back!

BLANDING BOOK REVIEW

Fountains of Silence by Ruth Sepetys

Review by Sharon Beskid

Under the fascist dictator General Francisco Franco, post civil war Spain has opened to tourists and businessmen. Eighteen-year-old Daniel Matheson arrives at the posh Hotel Castellana Hilton with his



parents. His father hopes to groom him to take over his oil business, while Daniel longs to be a photojournalist and capture the Spain of his mother's youth.

Daniel meets Ana, a hotel maid, and learns her father was murdered and her mother jailed for their war resistance efforts.

As Daniel and Ana's feelings grow for one another, his photographs begin to reveal the subtle, dark, lingering effects of the Spanish Civil War. Answers to secrets are revealed and decisions must be made to keep them safe.

Fountains of Silence is classified as a Young Adult novel, however the subject matter, relationships between characters, and well-researched writing make it an enjoyable read for anyone who appreciates historical fiction. I found Fountains of Silence to be a story that unravels smoothly with well-drawn characters, mystery, and history. Light shone on heavy subjects was tempered by believable romance and hope for a freer future. Within the story, parallels can be found between past and current political situations that made me pause. The Spanish Civil War is a subject I knew nothing about beforehand and found the factual articles, letters, speeches, and quotes dispersed throughout added realism and interest to the story. It spurred me to do further reading! If you enjoy Fountains of Silence, I can also heartily recommend Ruta Sepetys' Salt to the Sea.

Remembering Bobby de Sousa

By Lende McMullen, RAS Genealogy Researcher

As told by 93-year-old Gordon Ramspott who would visit his grandfather, Arthur Parker, a veterinarian living on School Street during the 1930's.

Gordon remembers Bobby de Sousa living on French Street. Bobby came from a very poor family and in summer, had no clothes to wear but his underwear. At the time, boys and girls would listen to a 15 minute radio series produced by cereal maker Ralston-Purina called "Tom Mix Ralston Straight Shooters." The series featured American film star, Tom Mix as a Western cowboy and his adventures.

Ralston-Purina offered many different contests of collecting their cereal box tops for comic books, badges, decoder rings, toy guns, flashlights, and even a toy telegraph set. One contest was to send in the most box tops and the winner would receive a pony!

Bobby de Sousa entered that contest and ran around to every household he knew for box tops and won! The pony arrived by train, broken, with a saddle, and bridle. But it arrived with shipping fever, a common malady similar to pneumonia.



If you have stopped by the Museum this spring in the morning, you most likely encountered the cheery Deb Craft. Deb volunteers in the Museum's perennial gardens every week, watering, pruning and transplanting. We thank Deb for her many hours of work making the grounds of the Museum look so beautiful.



George Frederick de Sousa and his wife Caroline Catherine Davis, parents of Bobby de Sousa before they were married in 1916



Wedding picture of James Robert "Bobby" de Sousa and Louise Marie Ogden. Louise was also from Rehoboth and lived on Bay State Road

Bobby got Dr. Parker over to see the pony while it was ill. Dr. Parker cured the pony successfully. After that, Bobby rode that pony everywhere. When there was a baseball game going on at Archie Burnett's at the corner of Locust Avenue and Summer Street, he'd tie that pony to a tree and play with the other kids; then ride the pony home. Bobby was so proud of that pony, it was still with him when he married!

Gordon wondered how a family who lived in such poverty could afford its care and feed and long figured that after his grandfather remedied the shipping fever, he must have continued providing for that pony and Bobby.

Bobby was brother to three sisters: Julia Etheline born Nov. 1, 1917 in East Providence, RI; Martha Louise born Nov. 2, 1923 in Rehoboth, MA; and Frances Elizabeth "Ellie" born May 4, 1925 in Providence, RI.

Bobby and his wife Louise had 3 children and lived in Vermont for many years. According to his granddaughter, he enjoyed fishing, was always smiling, and was "the best man she ever met.

James Robert de Sousa died August 31, 1996 in VT and is buried with his wife in Hawkins Cemetery Center Harbor, Belknap County, New Hampshire.

Conclusion "Looking Back Four Centuries"

setting off again a week or so later, they got out into the open Atlantic and again were forced to turn back.

At Plymouth, England, the travelers abandoned the un-seaworthy Speedwell. Some of the would-be passengers had to be left behind despite having sold their homes and possessions in preparation for the voyage. The remainder crammed aboard the Mayflower and set off for the third time on the sixth of September. The next step towards the future was being taken.

The Mayflower arrived in Plymouth in 1620 and here we all are in 2020. Again, things are not going as planned! Nevertheless, if you would like to help mark the 400th anniversary, please email Rebecca at president@rehobothantiquarian.org or call her at 508-252-5767.



REHOBOTH ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

4 Locust Avenue, Rehoboth, MA 02769

GENEALOGY GROUP

The Rehoboth Genealogy Group meets via Zoom the third Wednesday of every month from 7 to 9 PM. For an invitation link to the meeting or to learn more, please contact Lende McMullen by email at: genealogy@rehobothantiquarian.org. You can also visit the group's Facebook page for information.

Your Support is Important

COVID-19 has resulted in cancellations of most RAS events in 2020 that typically raised funds to support the Carpenter Museum, Blanding Public Library, Arts in the Village Concert Series, along with educational and cultural programming offered to the Rehoboth community. Please visit our website RehobothAntiquarian.org for donation information. Thank you so much.