

# Brockton Historical Society

Newsletter

Spring 2006

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## **Brockton Swedes Honor Great Naval Battle**

By James E. Benson

In the history of the great navies of the world, there was perhaps no greater battle than that between the ironclads, Monitor and Merrimac, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1862 off Hampton Roads, Virginia. This decisive battle in the American Civil War stands out in history as the dawn of a new technological age in naval warfare. This great battle also had special meaning and a deep sense of national pride to the immigrants of Swedish descent within the United States, for the inventor of the Monitor was the Swedish engineer, John Ericsson. Adding to that national pride was the fact that the Monitor was fitted with two Dahlgren guns, also of Swedish design and state of the art for the time, and that the commander of the Monitor had been a naval officer of Swedish ancestry, Lieutenant Worden.

"Swedes," cont'd, p. 2

## **Brockton Historical Society Celebrates 150 Years Daniel Waldo Field - Brockton's Quiet Benefactor**

By Barbara Lutz

On February 18, 2006, the D. W. Field Park Association and the Fuller Craft Museum joined with the Brockton Historical Society to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of Daniel Waldo Field. It was an all-day event that began with a wreath laying at the Field family gravesite located in the Melrose cemetery. President Larry Siskind introduced Reverend Kenneth Hilstrom, Jr., from the First Evangelical Lutheran Church, who conducted a brief ceremony while Jim Benson and Gerry Beals laid the wreath.

The celebration then moved to the Fuller Craft Center where guests were greeted by President Siskind, Patricia Houle, President of the D. W. Field Park Association, and Dawn Low, Education Director of the Fuller Craft Museum, and enjoyed a luncheon while listening to music performed by Emilian Badea, bassoon player for the Brockton Symphony Orchestra. They also enjoyed perusing the interesting and varied historical exhibits pertaining to D. W. Field and the park.

A program titled *The Life and Legacy of D.W. Field* commenced with John Dorgan, Superintendent of Field Park, explaining how the park was constructed. He highlighted his discussion with films of the park that had been taken at different times over the years.

Gerald Beals, Curator of the Brockton Historical Society, followed with an in-depth depiction of *D. W. Field: the Early Years & the Edison Connection*. Mr. Beals is Brockton's eminent historian, and he shared his personal memories of the park and of meeting D. W. Field.

"D. W. Field," cont'd p. 4



Larry Siskind and Patricia Houle cut the cake celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of D. W. Field as members of the BHS and Field Park Association applaud.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Brockton Historical Society's essential mission is to inspire public awareness and appreciation of the diverse peoples, places and events that have contributed to Brockton's evolving history. We preserve and interpret Brockton's historical record through active collecting, research, exhibitions, programs, and communications in the belief that an understanding of history can provide individuals and communities with connections to the past, a sense of belonging in the present, and responsibility for the future.

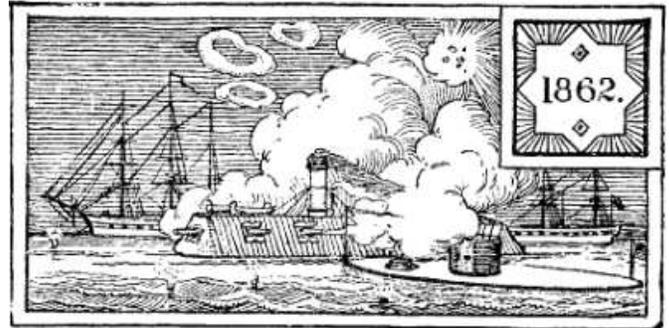
During the past few years, the Brockton Historical Society has been busier than usual offering special events, many at no charge to members and the general public. Unfortunately, volunteers are harder to come by, and as a result, it is harder to do the work that needs to be done in order to fulfill our mission. Fewer volunteers make it harder to be open to the public, care for collections, stay on top of building maintenance, raise money, and develop sound collections-based educational programs that add value to our community and contribute to civic pride.

So, what should we do to continue to provide services at our recent rate? First and foremost, we need to develop a specific strategy after a deep and thoughtful self-examination of our goals and our entire organizational structure. We must identify and examine our strengths and weaknesses and determine how relevant we are in today's world - some thirty years after the Brockton Historical Society was founded - given the changes in people's lifestyles, the change in the composition of our community, and the ever increasing importance of computer and internet communications in disseminating information.

The strategy must be enveloped in a multi-year plan focusing on the way we organize and govern ourselves, how we recruit and utilize volunteers, how we manage and improve our financial resources, how we care for our property and protect our collections, and to what extent we should collaborate in civic events.

What will it take to fulfill the strategic plan? Commitment, commitment, and commitment. To quote one of our past presidents, "being a trustee of the Brockton Historical Society involves a lot more than having it noted on one's resume or obituary." The same could be said, I might add, about being a member.

Lawrence M. Siskind



Contemporary Depiction of Monitor and Merrimac

"Swedes," from p. 1

By the time of the Civil War, Brockton, then North Bridgewater, had a growing community of Swedish immigrants in the Campello section of the town. The first Swede to arrive in North Bridgewater was Daniel Larson in 1844. In the late 1850's, after a trip back to Sweden, Larson returned to North Bridgewater with some sixty of his countrymen to work in the shoe factories of the growing town. Several of these men, including Larson, would join Lincoln's army in defense of the Union.

This band of immigrants grew and their descendants, ever mindful of their roots and deep sense of heritage, maintained pride in the accomplishments of the great Ericsson.

In addition to the Monitor, perhaps Ericsson's greatest invention was the screw propeller, a design which is in use to this day. On the eve of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of the Monitor and the Merrimac, ethnic pride resulted in one of the grandest parades the City of Brockton has ever witnessed.

On that spring evening, March 8, 1912, over 1800 men from the Swedish community gathered at 6 p.m. at the corner of Perkins Avenue and Main Street to lead a parade that would end at the Porter Church at the north end of the city. According to contemporary reports, more than 20,000 persons gathered along Main Street to witness this celebration. The 1800 men carried torches of "red fire" and flags. This grand parade was led by the sponsoring Swedish organizations within the city, the Englebrekt Lodge and Enighet Lodge of the Vasa Order, Liberty Lodge, Scandinavian Brotherhood of America, the men of the Vega Club who marched in their frock coats and beaver hats, the John Ericsson Lodge of the Knights of Pythias, as well as a contingent from the Swedish community in North Easton, and 150 men from the First Swedish Lutheran Church of Brockton. The Chief Marshal of the parade was Charles A. Norling

"Swedes," cont'd., p. 3

“Swedes,” from p. 2

The parade was divided into three regiments, each led by its own band. Three white horses pulled a float containing a likeness of the Monitor. Also in the parade were two witnesses of the actual ironclad battle, William Donovan and Zenas W. Crocker.

One of the centerpieces of the parade route was the home of Moses A. Packard (now the Dahlborg-MacNevin Funeral Home). The front of the home was draped in the blue and yellow of the Swedish ensign and the red, white, and blue of Old Glory, and large pictures of Ericsson and the Monitor hung on the house. Further up the parade route, City Hall was equally decorated. Mayor Howard and members of City government watched the parade from a reviewing stand at City Hall.

As the parade approached Allen Street, the G.A.R. veterans fell into the line of the parade. In line with these aging warriors, leading the R. B. Grover Camp, Sons of the Veterans, was “a stalwart, soldiery figure in a steel gray walking suit, with sombrero, canted rakishly on his broad forehead, Harold Powell, known all over the world as ‘Montana Harry,’ the sole survivor of the Custer massacre at the Little Big Horn in the Black Hills of Dakota in the 1870’s.”

As the parade approached the intersection of Belmont and Main Streets, the turret of the Monitor began to rotate by means of a hidden pulley system and fire broadsides at a float of the Merrimac advancing down Belmont Street.

After the parade passed City Hall, the crowd moved to the Porter Church to listen to orations by Lieutenant Governor Robert L. Luce and the Reverend Dr. Albert Marion Hyde praising the accomplishments of Ericsson and the Swedish people.

Following the orations, awards were presented to the two winners of the John Ericsson essay contest. First place was won by Ernst Grundstrom, a ninth grade student at the Goddard School. He was presented with a \$5.00 gold piece. Second place went to Harold Cohen from the Prospect School, a prize of \$2.50 in gold.

A large banquet was held by at Canton Hall by the Swedish organizations for the many state and local dignitaries in attendance.

James E. Benson is a BHS Trustee and co-author of  
*The Swedes of Greater Brockton*



Lawrence Siskind, John Learnard, and Nicole Tourangeau at the opening of Stonehill College’s “Brockton Shoe Industry” opening, May 1st



First Prize Winner Emily Kostka  
with Barbara Lutz and Larry Siskind

### Reception for Edison Essay Contest Winners

By Barbara Lutz

The Brockton Historical Society recently honored all participants of the Thomas Edison Essay Contest with a reception held at the museum. President, Larry Siskind was on hand to welcome the honorees and their families. He sparked interest in both the students and parents when he shared bits of Brockton history with a brief question and answer session.

He then introduced Barbara Lutz who has co-chaired the event with Gerald Beals for the last eight years. She explained the intent of the essay program was to acquaint the children with the Brockton/Edison connection. She spoke briefly of how, over the past eight years the number of essays that recognized the fact that Thomas Edison chose Brockton to launch his three-wire underground system that enabled him to illuminate the entire downtown section of Brockton from one central power system thus becoming the first city in the world to be so honored, has vastly increased. She read a paragraph from one student’s essay: **“Thomas Edison was a great man with many challenges in his life and he overcame those challenges. A role model like Thomas Edison could teach a child to never give up and not to let anyone make you feel like you can’t achieve your dreams.”** She then concluded that the students are learning a little more than just history.

“Edison,” cont’d, p. 7

“D. W. Field,” from p. 1

Jim Benson, Trustee of the Brockton Historical Society, spoke of *D. W. Field: Benevolent Benefactor* and revealed the long list of charitable organizations that continue to receive funds from Field’s legacy.

The next speaker was Barbara Shinnick, whose topic was *D. W. Field’s Vision: A National Treasure*. Mrs. Shinnick is the Past President and Founder of the D. W. Field Park Association, and she described the arduous process necessary to attain her goal of putting D. W. Field Park on the list of National Historic Sites.

Few cities or towns can claim such a beautiful National Treasure. Imagine being able to enjoy golf, art, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and just plain lazing around, soaking up the sun, and enjoying the beauty of nature in a 756 acre park within minutes from your home! All this was made possible by the vision of D. W. Field.

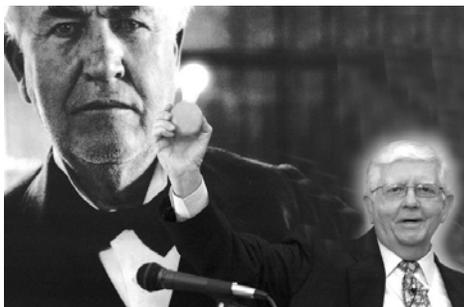
Following the discussions, President Siskind accepted a gift of a large portrait of D. W. Field from Mr. J. Richard Pearson, President of the Montello Heel Company, who today maintains the office where D. W. conducted business 100 years ago. The portrait was painted by Bill Beyer, a member of the Brockton Historical Society and a nationally recognized artist.

In the true spirit of a birthday celebration, everyone shared a very large birthday cake baked by Linda Ross and donated by her for this event. The cake had a very large picture of D. W. and depicted the Tower, a defining part of the park.

The day ended with trolley rides through the park with John Dorgan and Gerald Beals enlightening the riders with a history lesson on the park.

**NOTE:** This event was the first of a series of year-long celebrations planned in honor of D. W. Field. Watch for the **Poetry Reading** to be held at the Brockton Public Library and the **Golf Tournament** to be held at the D. W. Field Golf Course.

*Barbara Lutz is an Officer & Trustee of the Brockton Historical Society*



“Edison Contest,” from page 6

Curator Gerald Beals performed several unusual electrical experiments and held a question and answer session on Thomas Edison. Prizes were awarded for correct answers. President Siskind proceeded to give out the awards in the form of trophies and ribbons with a photographer on hand to take a picture of each student receiving his or her award.

Everyone that entered the contest received a Certificate of Participation.

Harbor One, a generous supporter of this event for the past several years gave each student a backpack. Mrs. Parlow, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher from the Raymond School was on hand to present her students with congratulatory flowers for the occasion. Best wishes on her retirement were extended to Davis School teacher, Mrs. Calogrias, who was on hand to congratulate her students. Also, a special thanks was extended to Ms Jean Chani, Director of Reading/Language Arts/Social Science for the Brockton School Department, who helped coordinate the event and was present at the reception.

Trophies and Ribbons were presented to the following students: 1<sup>st</sup> Place – **Emily Kostka**; 2<sup>nd</sup> Place – **Jacquelynn Morrissey**; 3<sup>rd</sup> Place – **Emily Augustine**; 4<sup>th</sup> Place – **Sabrina Lynch**; 5<sup>th</sup> Place – **Liz Hampton**; 6<sup>th</sup> Place – **Ray Lisa Williams**. Receiving Honorable Mention: **Josianna Fernandes, David Guzman, Deborah Joseph, Taj Joseph, Mathew Pierre, Monique Vacca, and Allison Byrne**.

The afternoon concluded with refreshments and a tour of the museum.

**NOTICE!**

The Annual Meeting of the Brockton Historical Society:

**Sunday, June 11, 2006  
The Homestead  
1:00 – 2:00 pm**

Following the meeting:  
The South Shore Woodturners  
A Demonstration

Brockton Historical Society  
Candidates for Officers & Board of Trustees

Officers: Lawrence M. Siskind, President; Mark Linde, 1<sup>st</sup> VP; Tim Trask, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP; Bob Wychulis, Treasurer; Barbara Lutz, Corresponding Secretary; Derek Canavan, Recording Sec.; Board: Kate Archard, Gerald Beals, James Benson, Sandra Bishop, George Churchill, William Donovan, Everett Hanson, Joe Joseph, John Learnard, Frederick Lincoln, H. Eldon Ransom, Ruth Stetson, Jody Williams, Willie Wilson.

*Brockton Historical Society*

Membership Form

216 North Pearl St – Brockton, MA 02301  
Email: [member@brocktonhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:member@brocktonhistoricalsociety.org)  
508.583.1039

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Individual membership: \$20.00

Family: \$30.00

Business: \$100.00

Life membership: \$200.00

(Please remit payment with membership form)

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

\_\_\_ Please add me to your Volunteer List

**Photos, Credits & Permissions**

Edison Winners | Michelle Reed  
Field Event |  
Edison Scene |

Stonehill | Janet Trask

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**Historic Citizen Award. SAVE THE DATE: November 4, 2006**