

# Harpswell Historical Society

## Newsletter Summer 2005

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*The Harpswell Historical Society is dedicated to the discovery, identification, collection, preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of materials relating to the history of Harpswell and its people.*

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### President's Report

For this newsletter there is a lot to report. In fact there is so much that I'm not sure where to begin, but that has never held me back!

By agreement between the Town of Harpswell and the Harpswell Historical Society, our archives are now the repository for the oldest town records. This transfer has taken place. The preservation of these records is one of the main reasons that our society was formed some twenty seven years ago. Although this has taken a long time to happen, it is good both for the town and our society. These records have been cleaned, cataloged and placed in archival boxes. This work was done by grants from the Maine State Archives. Many thanks to the Selectmen and the Town Administrator for their help and consideration on this important matter.

Our Society, through an interesting set of circumstances, has become the 501 (c)3 fiscal sponsor of New York film producer Joseph Goldman's documentary film *The Fishermen of Mackerel Cove*. Joe has been working on this film for many years and some of the Bailey Island fishermen that are shown

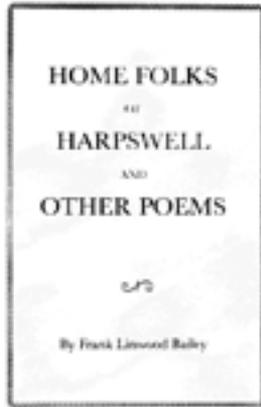
are no longer with us. The film does a very good job of recording a way of life that is becoming increasingly rare. The Maine Community Foundation has given grants to our society totaling seventy five thousand dollars to go directly to Joe's film project. If all goes as expected, and I believe that it will, we will be seeing *The Fishermen of Mackerel Cove* on National Public Television. The first showing of the film will be at Library Hall on Bailey Island.

Some time ago our Society was given a copy of a poetry book called *Home Folks of Harpswell and other Poems*. This was written by Frank Linwood Bailey in 1961. The forward of the book reads as follows: "It was only

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after considerable urging by my friends that I decided to make a collection of my poems and publish them in book form. To those who were around at the time these events were taking place during my boyhood days in Harpswell, will come the most enjoyment, but I hope my work will entertain anyone who may take the time to read it.”



We believe that this book will be of interest to a new generation. With help from the Harpswell Anchor, the Society has reprinted one thousand copies of this fine book. They will be available at the Museum, Gulf of Maine Books, Land’s End, Hawks Lobster and the Harpswell Anchor. The price will be fifteen dollars. If this venture is successful, watch for more of Harpswell history to be reprinted.

We have received five thousand dollars from the estate of Raymond Bibber. Mr. Bibber was a long time resident of West Harpswell and someone interested in the town’s history. This money is to be used on Centennial Hall. Before our Society acquired Centennial Hall it was on property that abutted Mr. Bibber’s farm. We will use Raymond Bibber’s kindness to put heating and cooling in Centennial Hall. We were given a number of things from the homestead including Raymond’s SCRAP BOOKS!

We have received one thousand dollars from the Maine Antiques Dealers Association. This money will be

used for work on documents in the archives.

We have received a large number of artifacts from the Paul Durgan home in West Harpswell. This collection contains such diverse items as a three quarter painted bed with grained background and floral design, a wonderful strap of brass sleigh bells and a girl’s bicycle with wooden wheels and

fenders. There are many more interesting items as well. These were donated by Gordon and Roberta Weil.

We have received a map of Pott’s Point. This was hand-drawn on parchment dated seventeen fifty-two, six years before the incorporation of the town of Harpswell. This is a gift of Sherry Clark.

We have received an English Sextant with the following inscription on its handle. “Presented by the British Government to Captain Bishop of



*English Sextant given to Captain Bishop, a Harpswell man, by a grateful British government.*

the Ship Jane Southard of Richmond, Maine. Acknowledgement of his kindness to a portion of the crews of the Brigs *Lero* of Windsor and the *Albion* of Aberystwith. In February of Eighteen Sixty Eight.” Captain John Bishop was a Harpswell man. This is a gift of Sherry Clark.

We have received a large Richie Ship’s box Compass. This is a gift of Sherry Clark. We have received an Eight Day Chelsea Ship’s Clock. This is also a gift of Sherry Clark.

We have received a display of post cards, photos and memorabilia of Harpswell Steamboats. This is a gift of Rete Williams.

We have received a very old baby shoe. This was found by the front door of the Museum.

We have received a coffee grinder. This was found by the front door of the Museum.



*Eight Day Chelsea Ship’s Clock*

This is just a sampling of the artifacts received since our last newsletter. As you can see our activities and collection are growing at a good rate

*Respectfully Submitted,  
David Hackett III, President*

**Many thanks to contributors of artifacts and services:**

- ◆ Maine Antiques Dealers Association
- ◆ Gordon and Roberta Weil
- ◆ Sherry Clark
- ◆ Estate of Raymond Bibber
- ◆ Harpswell Anchor
- ◆ Rete Williams
- ◆ Ruth Sligar
- ◆ Pat Moody
- ◆ Ed and June Phinney
- ◆ Lee Chipman
- ◆ Too many other good people to name



*Badge for World War II  
volunteer observers*

Route 123	Telephone 623
<b>SIXTH SEASON 1938</b>	
<b>Sunset-Rest Menu</b>	
<b>Basin Point - South Harpswell</b>	
No.	
1.	Full Course Seashore Dinner ... \$1.50
2.	Lobster Stew Dinner ..... .50
3.	Fried Clam Dinner ..... .50
4.	Lobster Stew ..... .40
5.	Fried Clams ..... .35
6.	Sandwiches ..... .15
	(Cheese, Peanut Butter, Clam, Lobster, Egg, Crabmeat Salad)
7.	Coffee, "Baxter's Finest," none hotter ..... .10
8.	Hot Parker House Rolls ..... .10
9.	Hot Potato Chips ..... .10
10.	Hot Doughnuts ..... .10
11.	Kraft Cheese ..... .10
12.	Dessert ..... .10
13.	Eggs (Boiled, Poached or Fried) .10
14.	Garden Products "in season" .10
No. 1 Full Course Dinner by appointment only. Home Cooked Food to order. Cottage Cheese to order.	
No liquor parties desired. Try the Baxter Coffee, you will be pleased.	

The menu from *The Sunset Rest*. Truly an example of the "good 'ole days" unless you wanted a happy hour.

## Christmas Tree Lighting

The fifth annual Community Christmas tree lighting will be held at Centennial Hall on December 10, 2005 at 7 P.M. With the help of some small children our growing Christmas tree will be lit. We will sing songs of the season. We will then retire to Centennial Hall for refreshments and the comradery of friends. A good time will be had by all. Please come and bring some friends.

## Harpswell Community Players

Our Society has become a sponsor of this very local group of thespians. Plays have been held in Centennial Hall for One Hundred Twenty-Nine years. This year's play was *The Red Hot Mamas*. It was sold out for both performances. We wish this group good success and much longevity.



Arm Band for the Aircraft Warning Service volunteers during World War II

## The Museum

The Museum was open during many Sundays during the summer of 2005. On behalf of the Society and all the visitors we offer our thanks to

the volunteers who kept the Museum doors open: Rete Williams, Ruth Sligar, Pat Moody, Ed and June Phinney and Lee Chipman.

## Some Large Turnips

In the days of Parson Eaton, there lived in Harpswell a man named Ezekiel Curtis who was an excellent farmer, -and, among other crops, he frequently raised some large and fine turnips of which he was very proud. It is said that on one occasion when Parson Eaton called on Ezekiel, Mr. Curtis spoke of what a good crop year it had been and bragged a bit about the size and quality of his turnips.

“Raised some big ones, did you, Ezekiel?” said the Parson.

“As big as your damned old head, wig and all,” was the reply!



*Visitors to the Harpswell Historical Society Museum may see Parson Eaton's wig and marvel at the size of Ezekiel Curtis' turnips.*

Cumberland

To either of the constables of the District of Harpswell:

Greetings you are herby required in His Majesty's name forthwith to warn Luke Curtis, who came into this district last May from Hanover to depart and go out of the District of Harpswell forthwith and make due return of your doing there on unto the Court of said District given under our hands at Harpswell on this third day of October and in the eight year of his Majesty's Reign A D 1768

William Sylvester,

Selectmen of the District

Paul Cunningham

## An Anxious Night on the New Jersey Coast

The Bark *Ethel* was a staunch and weatherly vessel as she clearly demonstrated on a winter's night in 1895. With Captain Frank Hodgkins as Master, and Ben Cammpbell, also of Harpswell as Mate, the *Ethel* had carried a load of general cargo to Montevideo and was homeward bound for New York with a cargo of hides.

The Captain's wife Lizzie ,and their two small daughters, Katherine Marsh and Anne Francis Hodgkins, had made the voyage. Anne had taken her first baby steps in Montevideo.

All the way up the coast the weather had been normal for a winter passage, alternately good and bad. The dreaded Cape Hatteras was safely passed; but nearing New York off the New Jersey Highlands, a howling northeast blizzard developed in the late afternoon. Thus the captain found himself off a lee shore with zero visibility and with the wind blowing at a whole gale force.

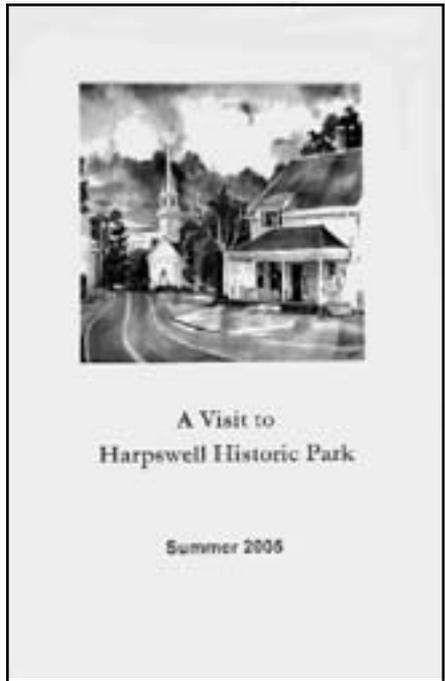
Wisely, Captain Hodgkins swung off shore and started to beat into the teeth of the gale, hoping to at least be able to keep off in deep water and avoid being blown ashore.

Late that evening the Captain went below to the cabin and said to his wife, "I don't know where we are and can't tell how far we are from shoal water. If we get into the breakers I'll drive her in as far as I can. You had better get yourself and the children ready to be lashed into the rigging." Then he went back on deck.

When he came below a short time later, he found his wife and two small children dressed in their warmest clothes and oilskins. His wife was sitting in the cabin knitting. In surprise, he said, "How can you knit at a time like this?"

She calmly replied, "I had to do something and this is the only thing that I could think of."

Fortunately, the *Ethel* held her own against the wind all night and made port the next day, but nine other vessels were wrecked that night on that same stretch of coast, with considerable loss of life. Moreover, the New York morning pa



*This new booklet by Ruth Silgar provides interesting historical and other information about the the Historical Park. It is available at the Museum.*

pers, knowing her approximate position, had listed the *Ethel* as "Probably lost."

It was a dramatic and anxious night for the Captain and his wife. Moreover, it was not a pleasant one for the crew who, mindful of their own situation, had to handle the sails and rigging all night as she beat, tack after tack, into the teeth of a winter blizzard and gale, clawing off a lee shore and away from disaster.

## Officers and Directors

### 2005-2006

Paul Dostie

David Hackett, III (President)

Pat Moody

Burr Taylor

Gerald York (Secretary/Treasurer)

*The Society would be grateful if you decided to send in your membership or membership renewal dues with this newsletter. You are welcome to use the form below. Many of you have missed several years. We will welcome you back.*

## Calendar for 2005

Oct. 13th **Annual Meeting**—  
Centennial Hall at 7:00  
pm The speaker will be  
James L. Nelson who will  
discuss the process of  
writing an historical novel.  
Mr. Nelson is a resident of  
Harpswell, a writer and  
former tall ship's sailor.

Dec. 10th **Community Christmas Tree  
Lighting** — Centennial  
Hall at 7:00 pm

\*To confirm a meeting or speaker  
call David Hackett (833-6322).

All members are welcome to attend both  
the board meetings and the public meet-  
ings. If you wish to attend a board meeting,  
or have a comment, please contact David  
Hackett (833-6322), Box 121, Harpswell,  
04079.

## Harpswell Historical Society Membership

\$10.00	Individual	\$15.00	Family
\$25.00	Contributor	\$50.00	Patron
\$200.00	Life	____.	Other

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Winter address, if different \_\_\_\_\_

*Your Contribution is tax deductible*

Please make your check payable to Harpswell Historical Society  
and mail it to Harpswell Historical Society; 1334 Harpswell Islands  
Road; Orr's Island, ME 04066

## Harpwell Historical Society

Thursday, Oct. 13th:

### **Annual Meeting—Cen-**

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The speaker will be James

L. Nelson who will dis-

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Mr. Nelson is a resident

of Harpswell, a writer and

former tall ship's sailor.