

Harpswell Historical Society

Newsletter

Summer 2009



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.

President's Report

Our Society was formed some 31 years ago. At that time Thurlow Alexander was President and I was Vice President.

What our Society has become has exceeded by far the hopes and dreams of our first board of directors. This has been accomplished by the caring and good will of a great many people. Our Society benefits from a town with a rich and colorful history.

Our Society preserved the Tan-Eaton-Hackett house and in the process formed the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust.

For more than twenty years in agreement with the Town of Harpswell, we have cared for and brought visitors into The Old Town Meeting House, a National Historic Landmark. On each 4th of July there you will hear a reading of the Declaration of Independence by musket toting rabble-rousers known as the Harpswell Militia.

Our Society, with the cooperation of the Harpswell Garden Club, has moved and preserved Centennial Hall. It has been a community building for 133 years.

Our Society has moved and preserved the District # 2 School. Built in 1829, it is close to being ready for Harpswell School children to visit. The last students were there in 1913.

Our society has been entrusted with the care and future of the Fishermen's Memorial Statue on the tip end of Timothy Bailey's island.

We have created a Museum with many artifacts to see. One of those artifacts was used by the true natives as much as 6,000 years ago. We have fire proof and climate controlled archives, the safest place in the town of Harpswell!

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We are the repository for the oldest records of the Town of Harpswell. We hold records and artifacts for the Kellogg Church, The West Harpswell Baptist Church, The Grange and The Friends of Eagle Island. There is currently an exhibit of paintings by William Gilcrist at the Museum. Mr. Gilcrist died in 1926 and lived for a time on the Cundy's Harbor Road. Other examples of his work may be seen at the Portland Museum of Art and The Farnsworth Art Museum. The Museum is open on Sundays from 2 to 4

from Memorial Day through Columbus Day. Please come and visit.

At this time there are two great things for you to know. First is the gift of \$25,000 dollars from the estate of Frances Linnell. Second, is the gift of the East Harpswell Baptist Church. Our Society has become part of the fabric of our town. Well respected for its good work, it is just what our founding members had hoped for.

*Respectfully Submitted,
David Hackett III, President*

History of The East Harpswell Baptist Church

Recently the Sebascodegan Island Garden Club deeded the East Harpswell Baptist Church over to the Harpswell Historical Society which is now responsible for its care.

The East Harpswell Baptist Church was built in 1843 on land purchased that year from Isaac Rich 2nd by Stephen Purinton Jr. "in behalf of the proprietors of the Meeting House which we now contemplate building on Harpswell Island". The deed was signed by Isaac Rich and his wife Betsey, and witnessed by Isaiah Snow and Simeon Hopkins. Two of the pews in the new meeting house were listed in the appraisal in 1845 of Stephen Purinton's estate: Pew Number 19 to Eunice H. Purinton, Pew Number 32 to Priscilla Lunt.

The Free-Will Baptist Church and Society of East Harpswell had been organized during the ministry of the Reverend George Lamb of Brunswick

in 1817. The original members included members of the Curtis, Purinton, Coombs, Rich, Snow, Totman, Dingley and Raymond families. The original records of the church are lost, but all indications are that the society used the old East Harpswell Meeting House built at Cranberry Horn about 1767 for their meeting place, prior to the building of this present church. The society's greatest period of growth was during the period from 1840 to the Civil War, with most of the families on Sebascodegan listed. The list of the members of the society is in the Raymond papers kept at the Pejepscot Historical Society Archives. Other familiar Island names on the list are the Coffins, Aubens, Herseys, Holbrooks, Trufants, Doughtrys, Catlins, Andersons, Goddards, Smalls, Riddleys, Toothakers, Stovers, Eastmans and Watsons.

While regular services have not been held for many years, the church had

its first restoration work and series of services during the 1930s under the leadership of Charles F. Huff of Orr's Island, and funds for its care have been continued ever since. The Sebascodegan Island Garden Club was formed during the 1960s to continue the restoration of the church. The old church has continued as the site of weddings, christenings and summer vesper services, keeping alive for the future this special place in our community.

Board Meetings

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



The East Harpswell Baptist Church



Merriconeag House, Harpswell about 1890

HHS Buildings and Sites:

- Harpswell Historic Park at Harpswell Center including:
 - HHS Museum (Open Sundays 2-4 PM from Memorial Day to Columbus Day or by appointment at any time)
 - Harpswell Cattle Pound
 - Centennial Hall
 - Old District 2 School House
 - Old Meeting Hall and Center Cemetery (owned by Town, administered by HHS)
- East Harpswell Baptist Church (Cundy's Harbor)
- Fisherman statue at Land's End (Bailey's Island)

You can visit these buildings and sites at any time or in some cases through prior arrangement. In addition, Centennial Hall and the East Harpswell Church buildings are available for rent at nominal cost for public events such as weddings, theater groups, clubs, and

speaking events. Please support your town's history and the HHS by using these facilities!

Oral History in Harpswell

Oral history is the recording, preservation and interpretation of historical information, based on the personal experiences and opinions of the speaker. It often takes the form of eye-witness evidence about past events, but can include folklore, myths, songs and stories passed down over the years by word of mouth. It is an invaluable way of preserving the knowledge and understanding of older people, but can also involve interviewing younger generations. (From Wikipedia).

Build your own personal legacy in Harpswell! Do you want to make history and leave a valuable legacy to future generations of Harpswell people? Put together an oral history by interviewing your grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, children and neighbors.

What about that lobsterman who lives next door? What about that guy who used to work at the old US Navy fuel farm (now Mitchell Field)? Didn't your aunt used to work at one of the old hotels in Harpswell or the old store on Orrs Island? Our Society president Dave Hackett can provide advice on how to do an oral history. Or, the Internet is an excellent source of information on conducting an oral history, including sample questions and preservation methods. When you complete an oral history, please consider placing a copy of it in the archives at the HHS.

The Harpswell Historical Society Museum and website (<http://community.curtislibrary.com/hhs/>) already have a number of oral histories, including:

- Memories of Anne Francis Hodgkins, daughter of well-known Harpswell ship captain Frank.

- Life in Harpswell, Maine in the Early to Mid 1900's by third, fourth and fifth graders at Harpswell Islands and West Harpswell Schools (1997-98).
- Occupations of an Earlier Harpswell by West Harpswell School students
- Movie on Mackerel Cove.
- Memoirs of the Harpswell Cottages by Lena Towle Salomon
- Cundy's Harbor Incident during the Revolutionary War by Carrie Chapman Purington.

Did you know that Harpswell has had 15 different school houses since 1758? Do you know where they all were or are? One was the building that now houses the Blackbird Café and Homes and Harbors office at the intersection of Route 123 and the Mountain Road.



Schooner John A. Allen nearly ready for launch from the Allen shipyard, Clark's Cove, Harpswell, Maine, 1902. The ship carpenter standing on the shore was Freelon Smith—the other individuals standing on the deck are unknown, but probably included some of the Allen family.

Home Folks of Harpswell and Other Poems

With each new membership or renewal of \$25.00 or more (coupon below), you will receive a free copy of the book of Harpswell remembrances and poems, *Home Folks of Harpswell and Other Poems* by Frank Linwood Bailey. We hope that a new generation of Harpswellians will find interest and appreciation of the people and history of Harpswell through the words of Mr. Bailey. His vivid, rich portraits of his neighbors and his many poems on life in Harpswell throughout the year recall a less hurried time in our community when students did their homework by

kerosene lamp and Harpswell fishermen hauled their boats in the late fall by hand with the help of ten or so friends and relatives. You can obtain a free copy of this unique book by joining or rejoining the Harpswell Historical Society at the contribution level or higher.

Annual Meeting

Aug 12th at 7:00 pm Annual Meeting—East Harpswell Baptist Church. The program will honor the gift of the church with a speaker, music and refreshments provided by the Sebascodegan Island Garden Club.

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.

Harpswell Historical Society Membership

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10.00 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15.00 Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25.00 Contributor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50.00 Patron |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200.00 Life | <input type="checkbox"/> ____ 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; 929 Harpswell Neck Road, Harpswell, Maine 04079

Ideas for the future

We need your help in improving and expanding the activities of the HHS, and eagerly solicit and welcome your ideas for future directions of the organization. The HHS belongs to its members and the town and should reflect their views on what it should be doing. In particular, please give us your feedback on HHS activities, including the Museum at Harpswell Center. How could we do things better?

- A speaker for our winter speaker event in February.
- Lobstermen who will show us how to make lobster traps and talk informally about lobstering then and now.
- A current or former school teacher to manage a day-long teaching program for elementary school

students on classroom activities in Harpswell in the 1800s.

- Volunteers to build benches for the 1800s District 2 school house behind Centennial Hall.
- A volunteer to research the history of relations among the various parts of Harpswell (excluding recent issues such as LNG and school closures!).
- A volunteer to expand the 1800 and 1900s old-time kitchen exhibit at the HHS Museum.
- We are also looking for objects to display in that exhibit. When you are cleaning out your attic or barn, please consider donating that old milk bottle, iron, washboard, pot, creamer, chair, table, wall hanging, 1920s calendar, waffle iron, skillet, toaster, plate or eating utensil to the HHS!



South Harpswell

Harpswell Historical Society

929 Harpswell Nexk Road

Harpswell, Maine 04079

<http://community.curtislibrary.com/hhs/>

Annual Meeting.

Wednesday, Aug. 12th

at The East Harpswell

Baptist Church at 7:00 pm

The program will honor

the gift of the church

with a speaker, music and

refreshments provided by

the Sebascodegan Island

Garden Club.