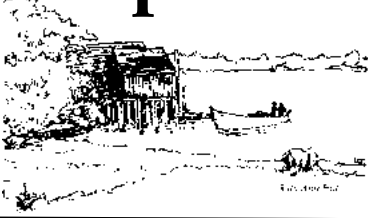


# Harpswell Historical Society

# Newsletter



Spring 2013

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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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## Harpswell Town among the Most Attractive Maine Resorts

*by Patricia Lowery  
(Written in 1947)*

Nowhere along the long coast of Maine is there a town with more unspoiled charm or interesting history than the Town of Harpswell. Although neither the palatial estates of Bar Harbor nor the carnival gaiety of Old Orchard to be found, those who give it their allegiance as their Summer home return year after year, many having come for half a century, a few years more or less.

The geography of the town explains some of its character, and, while probably adding to its scenic beauty, presents the town fathers with certain peculiar problems. The area of the town is about 12,000 acres, but due to its many inlets, islands and peninsulas, it is necessary, when traveling by land, to go over 30 miles, and through the Town of Brunswick in order to get from Bailey island to South Harpswell, a distance of a little over a mile by water.

### Much Travel

This past Memorial Day, five services were held in different parts of the town

under the sponsorship of American Legion Post 171, and its Auxiliary. Members from Bailey Island who attended all services travelled about 70 miles. For practical purposes, the Town is divided into an Eastern Division, consisting of Great or Sebascodegan Island, which includes Cundy's Harbor, Orr's Island, Bailey Island and several lesser islands, and a Western Division consisting of Harpswell Neck, with several small islands. Each division has a tax collector and a road commissioner, and the town's three selectmen are, by common consent, elected from various parts of the town, although all are voted on by all voters. The same procedure is used for school board members.

*Harpswell, continued on p. 2, column 1.*

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The widespread area presents a school problem in itself. Talk of consolidation has been in the air for several years but distances appear to make it impractical. The three schools on the Neck are going to try it this coming Fall, but there will be still some six or eight small schools in the Eastern Division. Transportation to the nearest high school, Brunswick High, is a major item in the town budget in addition to the tuition which the town pays for the high school education of its pupils.

### **Town's Connections**

Harpswell has some surprising connections. Originally, it was part of the parish of North Yarmouth, across Casco Bay. For a short time it was annexed to Brunswick, but in 1758 became incorporated as a town. It now belongs to the school district that includes Freeport, Pownal and Yarmouth but sends the majority of its high school pupils to Brunswick for reasons of accessibility. What is even stranger, it is represented in the State Legislature as a class town grouped with Casco and Naples, two inland communities whose interests are totally different from those of Harpswell, where the principal income of its residents is derived from fishing, clamming and the Summer trade. Even within the town itself there is a division of interests with three distinct

centers, namely, Harpswell Neck, Bailey and Orr's islands and Cundy's Harbor. The historic town house, built in 1756 for a church and used as such until the middle or the 19th century, now houses the selectmen's office. Centrally located for the Neck, it is far from the homes of

the Eastern Division Selectmen. On the other hand, Town Meeting is held at Red Men's Hall, Orr's Island. In the old days, residents of the Neck usually went to Town Meeting by boat, but today most of them travel the 30 miles by land.

### **At Cundy's Harbor**

Cundy's Harbor with two commercial fisheries is a busy little port. In its neighborhood are some of the finest of the summer homes. Fishing is also done on a big scale from Orr's and Bailey Island....Harpswell

Neck has less fishing. Lobstering and clamming occupy many of its residents; many commute to jobs elsewhere, some are farmers and dairymen.

### **Leading Authors**

Among the artists who have painted here and won acclaim far are Stephen Etnier and Forrest Orr. A promising young artist, Edythe Laws, now makes her year around home at South Harpswell. Writ



*Stephen Etnier*



*Forrest Orr*



*Edythe Laws*

Harpswell, continued from page 2

ers, too, have used the locale for many a story. The eerie charm of Whittier's "Dead Ship of Harpswell" is still a favorite piece for recitation at graduation exercises from the Harpswell schools. Elijah Kellogg, preacher, writer, friend of seamen and himself a seaman as boy, beloved pastor for half a century of the church built for him which bears his name, wrote many books for boys, the setting for some of which was Ragged Island, now owned by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Clara Louise Burnham, who summered at Bailey Island, wrote novels laid in the region.

Much history of the town is sprinkled with legend. A daring exploit during the Revolutionary War is credited to the men of Cundy's Harbor. One of the first taverns in Casco Bay was located at Cundy's Harbor. It was operated by a man named Eastman who not only was said to have Tory sympathies, but who also delighted in the profit he derived when the crews of British vessels engaged in harassing inhabitants of the Bay put in at his tavern for food, drink and gaiety.

The crew of the schooner Picaroon was a particular nuisance to this section of the Bay and a band of residents under one Colonel Purington determined to take her crew one night when they were carousing at Green House, as the tavern was called. The Britishers got wind of the plan, however, and did not put in on the expected night. Not to be thus thwarted, Purington's men set out to pursue the Picaroon in a 14-ton schooner, captured the prize off Seguin and proudly brought her back to Cundy's

Harbor. A Britisher named Sheppard was killed in the fight and buried on the point that now bears his name.<sup>1</sup>

There is hardly a section of the Town that doesn't have its legend of buried treasures. Many of these legends have been collected by William Haynes in a little volume called Casco Bay Yarns.... There is another delightful story about an old-time resident who, in attempting to harpoon a porpoise, was pulled overboard and proudly climbed on the animal's back and rode it up the bay.

### **Shipbuilding Center**

In the hey-day of sailing ships, many a fine vessel was built and launched from the several yards on the Neck, the largest of which was the Skolfield yard at North Harpswell...

Vacationists who want to know the Maine coast at its best could do no better than visit Harpswell.

*Excerpted From  
The Lewiston Journal Magazine section  
August 2, 1947  
Used with permission*

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1 For more information about this incident visit our website at <http://www.harpswellhistorical.org/250th/incident.htm>

### **Thank You...**

Thanks to all who attended HHS events during the winter, including the Vesper Services at the former East Harpswell Baptist Church at Cundy's Harbor, and the Lighting of the Christmas Tree, and Caroling at Harpswell Center. We especially appreciated the refreshments which the Harpswell Garden Club provided for the tree lighting event.

## Gone, But Not Forgotten

At any time, except for the hunting season, I suggest you trudge off to an old local cemetery. The historical data you can be exposed to, collect, photograph, or just enjoy is numerous! 18th and 19th century names, average life expectancy, differences in symbolic engravings, dates of local settlements, epitaphs, types of stone used, abbreviations, local folklore, and ancestors.



*East Harpswell cemetery*

Some of the data are obvious. For example, during the 18th and 19th century, men, women and children did not live as long as today. Men lived longer then; women did not. Now, the opposite is true. Reading epitaphs, lines of poetry and sayings is a quick study in comparative language. Some of the most visual differences observed are the symbolic engravings: angels of death, weeping willow trees, formations of letters and abbreviations. All of which raise questions about religious meaning, artistic expression, and social background.

Some of the data require more research. If you are interested in the relationship between the type of stone used for headstones and footstones, and the availability of natural resources, a

study of Maine bedrock geology would be helpful. However, in some cases, families brought their headstones to America with them, thereby, introducing a type of stone which may not have been indigenous to the area.

More questions are raised than answered. Why did so many people die within a given year? What was the technology of tombstone carving? How are religious beliefs expressed? Visit more than one cemetery. Each has its own characteristics and data. In my opinion, a visit to a cemetery can be as interesting as one to a museum or other historical site.

*By Peg Newberg*

*Past President of the HHS*

## E-Mail Addresses Wanted

Would you like us to email you future copies of the HHS Newsletters or news of upcoming HHS activities? If so, please send your email address to us at [harpshistory@outlook.com](mailto:harpshistory@outlook.com).

## Board Members

Paul Dostie, Dave Hackett, Ed Phinney, Rob Porter, Ann Standridge, Burr Taylor

## 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.

## “And Are Lobsters and Young Ladies Plenty?”

*Bill Lawlor of Freeport sent us a copy of a letter that his wife's great grandfather David E. Parlin received in 1887. Mr. Parlin was the President of the Auburn Colony at the time. He was also proprietor of the Boston Tea Store on Lisbon Street in Lewiston from the 1870's until his death in 1926. The 1875 "Maine Register" describes the store as "Fancy-Parlin & Merrill", and it probably catered to the "carriage trade" in those days selling tea and S.S. Pierce jams, etc.*

Brunswick, Me. July 25, 1887

Mr. D.E. Parlin

President, Auburn Colony

Dear Sir. There are thirteen young men in our party, and we want to know if we can hire a cottage at Harpswell for the second and third week in August. We are told that is the place to go for a real good time, and August is the best time to be there. We should prefer your cottage, if you would let it, but if we can't have that would take

the large one next to the road. You see, with our party, we can't get along with less than a whole house. We presume that the price would be \$7 or \$8 for the two weeks. That seems a little high, but we are in for a good time, and shall not mind the expense. Please let us know at once about it. Give us your best figures for the house, and we will decide at once. If you have an old Bill of Fare, kindly put one in, that we may see how you live. Does price of cottage include its being cared for, and our board while there? And are lobsters and young ladies plenty? If your answers are favorable, you can expect us down there, and we hope you can let us into your cottage for those two weeks.

We will be very careful of it, and think we would be quite an addition to your colony, as several of our young men dance and sing very nicely. We want to find some cool, quiet place by the seaside...[last line is lost]



## School House and Centennial Hall

Work has started on restoring the interior of the early 19th century District #2 School House behind Centennial Hall. In addition, the repainting of the front of Centennial Hall will begin shortly. Thank you to all who have donated funds in support of these projects and in response to our April fundraising letter.

## Museum Docents

Every summer, HHS members volunteer as docents at our museum at Harpswell Center. If you would like to volunteer this summer, please contact June Phinney at 725-2438. The museum is open every Sunday between Memorial Day and Columbus Day from 2:00-4:00 pm and at other times by appointment.

*The Society would be grateful if you sent in your membership dues, if you haven't already. If the information is on your check, there is no need to fill out the form.*

## Digitizing Our Media Collection

We are looking for volunteers to help digitize a collection of slides of Harpswell that was recently donated to the Historical Society. If you are interested, please send an email to [harpshistory@outlook.com](mailto:harpshistory@outlook.com)

## Information Wanted

An old cannon ball was discovered in the stone wall of the fireplace of one of the Navy Fuel Farm houses previously located to the right of the Harpswell Neck Fire Department. We are searching for information about the structures that formerly stood on this site prior to the construction of the two houses occupied by US Navy personnel beginning in World War II. Please email any information to us at [harpshistory@outlook.com](mailto:harpshistory@outlook.com) We hope to have the cannon ball on display at the HHS museum this summer.

### **Harpswell Historical Society Membership**

Please give whatever amount you feel is appropriate for you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

*Your Contribution is tax deductible.*

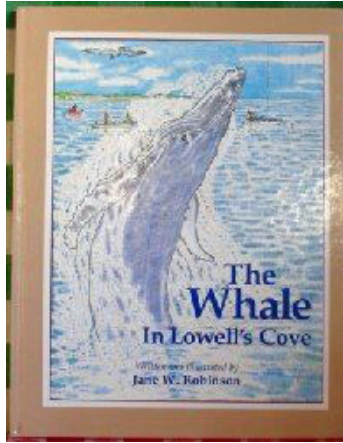
Please make your check payable to Harpswell Historical Society and mail it to Harpswell Historical Society, 929 Harpswell Neck Road, Harpswell, Maine 04079

## Reminiscing about Lowell's Cove

Lowell's Cove is one of the most beautiful coves on Orr's Island. It has been a working cove for the fishermen for years. There are several wharfs where the lobstermen patch their traps and paint their buoys to get ready for the season. As a child I watched them for hours while I swam in this quaint little cove. And when the tide was out, there was a tidal pool where little children loved to play.

It is also a cove where, in 1990, Lowell the Whale swam in for a visit and ended up staying for 30 days. Tourists from all over came to see our whale. Alden Leeman had strung a net to catch fish entering the cove, and the whale was very interested in these. Alden was a legend on the Islands and fished out of the cove for over 50 years. He was

a great swordfish fisherman who taught Linda Greenlaw everything she knows. She, of course, went on to become a great captain as well. In his later years, Alden lobstered right out of Lowell's Cove.



After the whale, the pogies followed. The smell was horrible. There was also a sea moss factory, which was very successful, and an IGA store, which people frequented every day. Little Island Motel was another cute establishment run by Jo Atlas for years. It had a gift shop and breakfast every morning.

The storm of 1978 washed all the docks up in front of Sue and Stan Bakkers house, which was built in the early 1800's. Everyone helped save whatever items could be saved.

Sea glass and shells can be found in this beautiful cove, but we want to keep it our little secret....

*by Joan Ouellette*



## What is it?

The item pictured on the left is in the museum. However, we do not know what it is. Can you help? If you know what it might be, please let us know. You can email us at [harpshtistory@outlook.com](mailto:harpshtistory@outlook.com) or visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/harpswellhistoricalsociety>

## **Harpwell Historical Society**

929 Harpswell Neck Road

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<http://www.harpwellhistorical.org/>