



# Harpswell Historical Society

## Newsletter Fall 2017

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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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### Johnson Harmon

*Excerpted from A History of Harpswell, Maine by Richard R. Wescott*

Johnson Harmon of York, Maine played an important role in the early settlement of Merriconeag [Harpwell] Neck, both as a settler and as an agent for the Pejepscot Proprietors who, in the early eighteenth century, owned most of what is now Harpswell, Maine. He was born in 1680

The three winters from 1719-1722, with the permission of the Pejepscot Proprietors who had been granted Merriconeag Neck and nearby islands by the General Court, Harmon left his home on the north side of the York River to go to the Neck to cut timber and firewood.

In the summer of 1720 the General Court sent a delegation to meet with the Abnaki who gave assurances of their good intentions, but their killing and stealing of cattle and their threats to settlers along the Kennebec and Androscoggin Rivers and around Casco Bay continued. In November, Harmon, who had been commissioned as a captain of a militia company, was appointed by the General Court to a new delegation which had been created to meet with the natives at Georgetown on the lower Kennebec River to find out why they were continuing their

aggressive actions against English settlers.

At the Georgetown meeting, the Abnaki demanded specifically that the settlements being made by the Pejepscot Proprietors around Merry-meeting Bay be withdrawn. The Massachusetts delegates refused to make any such pledge. In fact they demanded and received four sachems as hostages for the Abnaki's good behavior.

Father Râle, the Jesuit missionary at the Norridgewock village of the Abnaki, who was militantly opposed to the extension of British settlements in Maine, was angered by both the taking of the hostages and the Massachusetts delegates' stated intention to foster more English expansion up the Kennebec River and along the shores of Merry-meeting Bay. He demanded that another conference be held the following year at Brunswick where the Pejepscot Proprietors had built Fort George as a strong point to protect their settlements along the Androscoggin River and Merry-meeting Bay.

When the Massachusetts government agreed to the later meeting and sent a delegation to Brunswick, Father Râle, in a militant display of defiance, paraded a couple of hundred Abnaki warriors into the town. The conference was a com-

**Harmon, continued on p. 2, col. 1**

### President's Report

*Dave Hackett*

This past year has been a good one for our Society. A lot of good things have happened. We have had a few more visitors than in years past. Artifacts regularly come to the Museum, among them, a hooked rug depicting the Basin Point Tide Mill, a glass jar filled with wooden lobster pegs, and a Portland Cutter sleigh (more about that in a bit), a wonderful tool collection, two school desks, one from the Orr's Island School and one from the old West Harpswell School and many more pieces of our history.

Many people have found a connection to some of their ancestors from the contents of our archives.

Our fund drive has had a higher total than in years past.

We acquired the Museum building in 2000. At that time our Society

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plete failure, for Father Râle renewed his demands that the British abandon their encroachments upon the natives' lands and release of all the hostages they held, and the English representatives, acting upon their instructions from the Massachusetts government, refused flatly to make any such concessions

Frustrated by their inability to run down the Abnaki away from their principal village at Norridgewock, in August 1724, Colonel Westbrook ordered Captain Harmon's and Captain Jeremiah Moulton's companies to attack again that bastion. Starting up the Kennebec River in seventeen whaleboats with 200 men, Harmon and his father-in-law Captain Moulton hoped apparently to surprise the natives since the English did not usually mount expeditions during the summer months for fear of illnesses erupting among the militia.

As they approached Norridgewock cautiously in the early afternoon, Harmon divided the militia. He scouted through the cornfields around the village looking for the enemy while Moulton led his men directly toward the center of the village. Exactly what happened that

afternoon is unclear from the various accounts of the battle by participants, but the village was overrun by the militia after some hard skirmishing. At some point in the melee, Lieutenant Richard Jaques, Harmon's son-in-law, shot, killed, and scalped Father Râle. All told 26 or 28 of the natives were killed and scalped and another thirty or forty were killed or drowned in the river as they fled. A young white boy who had been taken captive in a native raid was freed. The following day, before they returned down river, Harmon and Moulton had the bodies of the natives heaped into a pile in the center of the village which was then put to the torch.

When Harmon and Moulton brought their forces back to Falmouth and reported their victory to Colonel Westbrook, the town erupted in celebration even as rumors spread that a native counter-strike was already being organized. Colonel Westbrook in his report to Lieutenant Governor Dummer recommended that Harmon be commissioned as a field grade officer as a reward for his victory. Harmon sailed the next day for Boston with Colonel Westbrook's dispatch in hand to report the expedition's suc-

cess directly to Governor Dummer and the General Court.

Upon his arrival at the capital, Harmon was invited by the Governor's Council to give it an account of the attack at Norridgewock, and he gave them a brief report. After that meeting, under oath, Harmon swore to the authenticity of the scalps taken from the Abnaki and Father Râle to qualify his men to receive the so-called scalp money that the government paid for the killing of hostile natives. After the required certification was given by Harmon, a warrant was issued to the treasurer to pay Harmon 100 pounds as a reward for the killing of Father Râle. Each of his men received a share of the scalp money which was computed on the basis of fifteen pounds for each adult male scalp taken and eight pounds for each scalp taken from a woman or child.

Johnson and Mary Harmon had moved to Merriconeag Neck in October 1735, having sold for five shillings their house and the twelve acres upon which it was situated in York, along with the outbuildings, barns, wharves, orchards, and fences to their son Joseph who would take over full ownership of the premises immediately after his father's death.

Six years after he and Mary moved to the Neck, perhaps because he sensed that he was getting on in years - he was now 61 - Harmon sold all his land and buildings on the Neck in 1741 to Joseph for seventy pounds in bills of credit. He and Mary moved back to York to live on the farm where he died a decade later on April 17, 1751.



*Johnson Harmon and his men attack the Abnaki at Norridgewock, killing and scalping Father Râle.*

## Battle of Norridgewock

*Wikipedia*

The Norridgewock Raid occurred in contested lands being fought over by England, France and the Wabanaki Confederacy, during the colonial frontier conflict referred to as Governor Dummer's War. Despite being called a 'battle' by some, the raid was essentially a massacre of Indians by colonial British troops. Captains Johnson Harmon, Jeremiah Moulton, and Richard Bourne (Brown) led a force of two hundred colonial New Englanders, which attacked the Abenaki village of Narantsouak, or Norridgewock, on the Kennebec River; the current town of Norridgewock, Maine developed near there. The village was led by, among others, the sachems Bomazeen and Welák-wansit, known to the English as Mog. The village's Catholic mission was run by a French Jesuit priest, Father Sébastien Râle.

The raid was undertaken to check Abenaki power in the region, limit



*The memorial monument for Father Sébastien Râle at the Norridgewock battle site in Madison, Maine.*

Catholic proselytizing among the Abenaki (and thereby perceived French influence), and to allow the expansion of New England settlements into Abenaki territory and Acadia. New France defined this area as starting at the Kennebec River in southern Maine. Other motivations for the raid included the special £100 scalp bounty placed on Râle's head by the Massachusetts provincial assembly and the bounty on Abenaki scalps offered by the colony during the conflict. Casualties, depending on the sources consulted, vary, but most accounts record about eighty Abenaki being killed. But both English and French accounts agree that the raid was a surprise nighttime attack on a civilian target, and they both also report that many of the dead were unarmed when they were killed, and those massacred included many women and children. As a result of the raid, New Englanders flooded into the lower Kennebec region, establishing settlements there in the wake of the war.

## **French & Indian Wars in Maine**

*by Michael Dekker*

*Our Annual Meeting on September 20, 2017, featured Michael Dekker. Following is an excerpt from his book French and Indian Wars in Maine (Military).*

Having unsuccessfully attempted to destroy the principal village of the Kennebec people at Norridgewock already during the war, Massachusetts launched another foray into the heart of Maine in the summer of 1724. Hoping to catch the native population at their village during the time of their corn harvest, the expedition pushed off from Fort Richmond toward the end of August. In seventeen whaleboats, 208 men in four companies under the overall command of Captain Johnson Harmon threaded

their way up the Kennebec River toward their intended target. Aside from destroying the village, Captain Harmon was ordered to finally seize Father Sebastian Rale for his subversive activities among the Kennebec people. The approach of the Massachusetts force was nearly betrayed when it encountered the family of a well-known and respected Kennebec sagamore known as Bomazeen while portaging around the falls in present Skowhegan. Killing Bomazeen and his daughter, the force continued on undetected with Bomazeen's wife in tow as a captive.

The expedition arrived unnoticed before the village at Norridgewock on the afternoon of August 23. Observing the village from a distance, Harmon and his men noted wisps of smoke rising from the cornfields beyond the village. Hoping to apprehend people at work in the fields, Harmon with sixty men marched around the village toward the cornfields and the mouth of the Sandy River. Captain Jeremiah Moulton was given the task of taking the village. Moulton positioned two of his companies in ambush to prevent the people from escaping while he moved forward with his own company to assault the village. Moulton's attack came as a complete surprise. Unarmed, as Moulton's force entered the village, the men of Norridgewock offered ineffective resistance as the women, children and elderly fled for their lives. With the river the only possible route of escape, panicked people attempted to swim to the opposite shore or scramble aboard canoes, many of which had no paddles. They were pursued by Moulton's men, who poured musket fire into the confused, huddled mass of people thronging the Kennebec.

***Dekker, continued on p. 4, col. 3***

held very few artifacts, whereas at this time we are filled to the point that we must find more storage space. It speaks very well to the stewardship and place the Harpswell Historical Society has in the fabric of the Town of Harpswell.

We have had good events in the past year. On Memorial Day, Centennial Hall was filled with military uniforms and mementos from Harpswell veterans. The veterans' Group had their luncheon in the hall and it was a great event. Many thanks both to and from our veterans. The 4th of July was well received, to hear the angry patriots (we very much want to remove King George) deliver our Declaration of Independence at the place where it was first read, is both a fine civics lesson and a way to bring the true meaning of the 4th. Harpswell Day was a rip roaring success, it was done as a joint event with the Harpswell Heritage Land Trust. We had many fine craftsmen plying their trades. I was both surprised and heartened by the amount and very great interest of the children of our town. I heard many comments that day, the vast majority asked, please will you do this again next year. The answer is a resounding YES. At our Halloween Spirit walk in the old Graveyard we found some wonderful Spirits connecting with some very spirited young people. The annual tree lighting at Centennial Hall was done with the collaboration of the Harpswell Garden Club with fine caroling and great refreshments. Our Society has good working relationships with many organizations. Many thanks to other organizations as well as many thanks from other organizations, as it should be.

Much work was done to our buildings. Work on the interior of the District #2 School made it ready for

students. The Society's newest building is behind the school, a duplex outhouse (it is ready for business, so to speak). Centennial Hall had the cellar bulkhead rebuilt, the back of the building was painted, a new heater (courtesy of Harpswell Community Theater) and new wiring and shelving was installed in the hall's tiny kitchen. The second floor of the Museum was repaired, repainted and rewired, and new gutters on the museum fixed a number leaks into the building. The windows on the south side were repaired and painted. Bars were added to the windows in the main display room for security.

There are many interesting and unusual things in our collection, one recent arrival is a Portland Cutter sleigh. Portland Cutter is a style of sleigh. It was purchased well over 100 years ago by a man who then moved to northern Maine to become a school teacher. It sat in a barn still in its packing crate for many years. The barn eventually leaked on it over a long time causing a lot of rot. We plan to remove it from its crate for the first time, repair and restore it as part of our Subsistence Workshop and someone will have the first ride in a sleigh with quite a past!

When the killing was done, Mouton and Harmon, who returned from the cornfield finding it devoid of people, set fire to the village.

It is impossible to provide a firm estimate on the number of Norridgewock who lost their lives in the assault. Perhaps as many as eighty men, women and children, young and old alike, perished that day, many of whom drowned, their bodies drifting down the Kennebec with the current. Among the bodies that littered the village itself was that of Father Sebastian Rale. Moulton had specifically ordered his men to take Rale alive, but in the chaos of the onslaught, Rale was killed and scalped. The expedition returned to Fort Richmond on August 27 with twenty-eight scalps, three redeemed English captives and four native prisoners. Of the twenty-eight scalps, only six belonged to adult males; the other twenty-two belonged to women or children. Harmon was lauded as a hero upon his return to Boston, and Samuel Penhallow of Arrowsic proclaimed the attack "the greatest victory we have obtained in the three or four last wars." For the people of Norridgewock, the attack was an unmitigated disaster. In grief, the shattered remnants of their people removed themselves to the security of St. Francis and the French.

*In Mr. Dekker's talk and the discussion afterward he emphasized that there was considerable brutality on both sides of the struggle. Indeed, Johnson Harmon and other men had survived a terrible attack by Indians when they lived in York several years earlier. He cautioned that one should not judge the actions of people from another era.*

## Some Snippets from Around the Country

Petersburg Times (SA : 1887 - 1919) Fri 26 Jan 1894 Page 2  
Cats and Dogs. HIS DOG STOPPED THE LEAK.

### HIS DOG STOPPED THE LEAK.

One of the few dogs worth having is owned by Silas Holbrook, of East Harpswell. Starting out from the wharf in a boat with his master the other day the dog noticed that the plug was out of the bottom of the boat and the water was coming in. After calling attention to the trouble he placed his paw over the hole and kept the water out until his master found the plug and replaced it.

Cambridge Chronicle August 19, 1914

Edward J. Conley, the popular Cambridge street undertaker, has been dividing his time this summer between Cambridge and South Harpswell, Maine, where his family now is. Last Sunday Mr. Conley royally entertained a group of his Cambridge friends, who motored to Portland on Saturday. The party, which consisted of Mine Host Conley, Dr. C. S. Cahill, Dr. J. J. Boyle, Milk Inspector William A. Noonan, Dr. Robert Young and E. A. Counihan, Jr., left this city Saturday morning at 7 in automobiles owned by Dr. Young and Mr. Conley, arriving in Portland at 5 p.m. Mr. Conley owns a fine 60-foot schooner yacht, which transported the party to the island. Only Dr. Young's machine returned on Monday, as the other became stalled near Portland and had to be left for repairs.

It is interesting that this is news, and that it took 10 hours to drive from Cambridge to Portland. Also, they do not use words such as automobile, drive or car, but call it the "machine" or "motored."

## Bailey Island Library Hall

### An Appreciation

Way back at the start of the twentieth century, on a small island off the coast of Maine, a group of schoolgirls longed for a special spot where books could be read and tales could be told, where stories and secrets could come alive.

They wanted a fertile and nourishing place, like the generous ocean that yielded its bounty to the lobstermen who were their fathers and brothers.

Through fortitude and fund-raising their wish grew wings, attracting support from folks both near and far.

And so it came to be-Bailey Island Library Hall!

For more than a century it's held its ground, keeping watch over the cove, enduring brutal winds and winter storms, and beckoning summer every year to spread its warm and glowing light through its open doors and palladian windows.

Famed and honored, lovingly cared for, Library Hall still stands tall and proud, in proper homage to dreams come true.

The Mingo Club is pleased to submit materials on the following topics to The Harpswell Historical Society.

History of Island Life (1600's through mid-1900's)

Early Mingo Club Founders & The Origin of the Name "MINGO"

Bailey Island Library Hall: Design and Architecture

Carl Jung and the Bailey Island Connection

National Historic Registration of Bailey Island Library Hall Mingo Club Minutes

(September 7, 1909-April 27, 1953) Lending Library Records (1949-1959)

## Some tools acquired by the Society recently

How many can you identify?

1

A writer in the Boston Transcript gives this reminiscence of the Rev. Dr. Elijah Kellogg of Harpswell, Me.: "One Sunday before his sermon the doctor announced from his pulpit: 'The widow Jones' grass is getting pretty long. I shall be there with my scythe, rake and pitchfork at 4 o'clock tomorrow morning, and I hope every male member of the congregation will be there too.'



2



3

Cambridge Sentinel, Volume XXII, Number 22, 4 August 1928

## Made Fuel Pipe From Kelp Root

East Harpswell, Maine.—Patching a motor engine with seaweed and making it run is the latest achievement of Yankee Ingenuity.

When **Carroll Merriam** started for a trip in his motor boat to haul his lobster pots he found that nocturnal marauders had stripped his craft. They stole oars, brass running lights, six cells of battery and oilskins, and, worst of all, they cut his six-foot copper gasoline feed line connecting the tank with the carburetor.

With no place within miles where he could obtain copper pipe, with no

near neighbors and with an order to furnish fifty fine lobsters at 50 cents a pound for a noontime shore dinner, **Merriam** showed that Yankee Ingenuity still flourishes.

He had a battery for a radio set in his home, and this he soon connected with his motor.

Then he rowed his dory out a few hundred yards to the Seal ledges, where he found a piece of kelp or devil's apron with an eight-foot stem that was hollow. Taking this ashore, he pushed one end over the end of the severed pipe projecting from his fuel tank and the other end left at the carburetor.

Wrapping them tightly many times from a roll of friction tape, he thus improvised out of the hollow stalk a fuel pipe line that enabled him to haul his traps and fill his order.



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



1



12



13



14



15



16



17



1. This is a **cooper's adz** for making barrels.
2. This is for making hooked rugs.
3. This is a **bait box** for lobster traps.
4. This is a **krauter** for slicing cabbage for sauerkraut.
5. This is the top and bottom of a **cigar mold**.
6. This is a **froe** which is used for splitting shingles out of a block of wood or making splints for basket weaving.
7. This is a **snow knocker**, which is used to knock the snow from horse's hooves. It was kept on the harness.
8. This is a **cow bell**.
9. This is a **needle** for knitting trap heads.
10. This is a **lipped adz**. The curve is for cross grain cutting. It takes off chips. In an adz the blade is perpendicular to the handle. It is used mostly for ship building.
11. This is a **broad hewing axe** for squaring timbers. This is a left-handed axe because it is sharpened on the left side and flat on the right.
12. This is a **bow roller** for tub trawling for ground fish. A trawl is a long length of rope with a hook every fifteen feet and a buoy on either end which is left out overnight.
13. This is a pair of **ice skates** which are attached to boots with leather straps.
14. These are models of a **clam basket** and **lobster pot** made by Herbert Dougherty.
15. This is a **laundry washer**. Grab the handle, pull it around and let go. It is spring loaded and "automatically" agitates. It was built about 1900.
16. This is the **label** on the laundry washer. Note that the label promises that the washer will "save womens (sic) lives."
17. We do not know what this does, although we know that it is not for caulking. Please, if you know, let us know.



### **Can you recognize this building?**

It is still standing, although it has been added to. You can find the answer on our website at [www.harpswellhistorical.org](http://www.harpswellhistorical.org) or on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/HarpswellHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/HarpswellHistoricalSociety) or by calling Burr Taylor at 207 725-2802.

### **Help Us Cut Our Costs**

A big thank you to the **one hundred four** people who have agreed to receive their newsletter by email.

We appeal to readers to send their email addresses to [harpshistory@gmail.com](mailto:harpshistory@gmail.com) so they can receive their HHS newsletter by email. It would help us save postage, printing expenses, and time for the people who must individually fold, address, stamp, and mail each hard copy. You will receive the newsletter in color, too. Thank you!

### **Board Members**

Sam Alexander, Steve Black, Dave Hackett, Daniel McMahon, Ann Standridge, Burr Taylor

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