

# The Newsletter of the Tremont Historical Society

Vol. 17, No. 2

Summer 2014

Published periodically at Bass Harbor, Maine. The Society is a non-profit organization whose officers are: John MacDuffie, President; Charles Liebow, Vice President; Muriel Davisson, Secretary, Michael Smith, Treasurer, Priscilla Keene, Program Chair. The Newsletter is mailed to members and contributors. Extra copies are available. Newsletter Editor is John MacDuffie.

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*Art and Nan Kellam, rowing their dory BLB in which they traveled from their home on Placentia Island to Bass Harbor for nearly 40 years.*

*Photograph by Nancy Rigdon; courtesy of E. Northwood Kenway*

## A VISIT TO THE KELLAMS

Because of a growing interest in the life of Art and Nan Kellam on Placentia Island, our sister organization, the MDI Historical Society, has prepared an exhibit at their museum in Somesville, to run for the 2014 and 2015 seasons. In addition, partnering with the Tremont Historical Society, a day trip to Placentia on August 11, 2014 for a limited number of people has been arranged. This group will board the excursion vessel, *R.L. Gott*, carrying 40 passengers, at 9:00 a.m. and will be set ashore in small boats for a time of exploration and guided discovery of the major sites of the Kellams' four decades on the island. Peter Blanchard, author of the definitive biography of this unique couple, *We Were An Island*, and others will provide direction. Lunch will be provided. The cost for this adventure will be \$50 per person, and 20 places have been reserved for members of each of the two sponsoring societies. Tremont Historical Society members wishing to reserve one of the spaces should contact Muriel Davisson at 244-3826, or by e-mail at [muriel.davisson@jax.org](mailto:muriel.davisson@jax.org). When this August 11 event was announced to MDI Historical Society members in mid-June there was such

enthusiasm that available space for their members was filled at once and a long waiting list developed. So MDI decided to arrange several additional trips on a subsequent weekend to accommodate many of those unable to secure one of the original seats. So on August 16, 17, and 18 at 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., six additional trips on a smaller boat, the College of the Atlantic's research vessel, MV *Osprey*, will be made. The cost will be the same. Reservations for seats still unfilled may be made by calling MDI Historical Society at 276-9323 or by e-mail to [virginia.mellen@mdihistory.org](mailto:virginia.mellen@mdihistory.org).

We are gratified that this interest has developed, and so many people are interested in seeing the site of the Kellams' house and the retreat they dubbed The Bandstand, on Placentia Island. Our Board agreed to loan the Kellams' dory, *BLB*, to the MDI group for the week of their opening and the first week of the new exhibit. She will be returned to our Country Store Museum in Bass Harbor by the time of our opening on July 7. It is hoped that a similar dory will be under construction near the Somesville Museum during the summer. (*See following story about the Bass Harbor Country Store Museum's opening.*)

## AN EXCITING NEW ACQUISITION

Paul Blanchette, a friend of THS, has gifted us with a large collection of pictures of sardine carriers and many other vessels common to these waters over a long period of our history. We have only just begun to explore the riches of this collection, so only a tantalizing glimpse can be shared in this abbreviated summer edition of our Newsletter.



*It is clear that this photo is taken at Great Gott Island, with the bar that shelters the Pool in the background. Perched on the shingly promontory is a small house that, in my youth, was occupied by Berl Gott, who was named after a pretty famous city which some people say his father visited on a trading voyage long ago. Berl's brother was Mont, who lived in a house on the shore of the Pool and was thought to be pretty eccentric—he used as a team to pull a hay wagon a horse and a cow, and spent a good deal of his time talking to them as if they were his best friends.*

*Our archivist, Chuck Liebow, sent me this picture from the Blanchette Collection with a question as to whether one of the two men was Mont, and wasn't he the one who had the mail contract? My reply to that is that the one on the left might be Mont, and no, it was Berl who had the mail contract. In my youth his son Russie had inherited the mail contract, and kept it to his dying day. The excursion boat R.L. Gott out of Bass Harbor has been ennobled by that illustrious name. Russie was a pretty colorful character too. We'd like to run some stories about Russie, Berl, and Mont from some of the few folks still called Gott's Islanders. Won't you send us some?*

*And, I can't help pointing out the lovely peapods these gentlemen are accompanying in the scene before us. It was one such which Ruth Moore tried to persuade Cliff Rich to build for her—and who can quarrel with such a choice?*

*Editor*

*P.S. Muriel Davisson, Ruth's niece who lives in Ruth's Lighthouse Road home, tells me that her brother Bud is refastening the skiff that Ruth got instead of a peapod because Cliff was—well, Cliff. When she's done, she'll come back home to Bass Hbr. and maybe, just maybe, Muriel will plant her full of nasturtiums or hollyhocks or – go rowing?*

## **BASS HARBOR COUNTRY STORE MUSEUM OPENS JULY 7**

Following the custom of opening close to July 4<sup>th</sup>, we begin our Monday-Wednesday-Friday schedule Monday July 7, with hours remaining 1:00-4:00 p.m. Volunteers will staff the authentic store once run by P.W. Richardson in the first days of our harborside village, when a store needed to carry just about everything that folks might need for survival.

Let it be noted that not only do we own and display the Kellams' dory *BLB* which was built by the same Cliff Rich who refused to build a peapod for Ruth Moore; not only do we have the desk on which Art Kellam wrote his imaginative story *The Steersmen*, but some other gems we have yet to share with you; we also have copies of Peter Blanchard's book *We Were an Island* which is hailed as the pinnacle of biographical authenticity where the Kellams are concerned. In addition, our little Museum houses an astonishing variety of period pieces and local archival treasures which have been collected and preserved by many folks who have ancestral lines leading back to the beginning of settlement here.

We can always use more volunteer docents for the season which runs until Columbus Day; we are eager to recruit a few more Board members to help us manage and shape the spirit of our Society; and we are grateful to the nearly 300 members and donors from all over the country who ensure our financial solvency. We have an excellent web site, [tremonthistory.com](http://tremonthistory.com)

John MacDuffie, President and Newsletter Editor

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**MISSION STATEMENT**  
**Adopted June 24, 2002**  
**By the Membership**  
**Tremont Historical Society**

The Tremont Historical Society shall be dedicated to preservation of the history of the towns of Tremont and Southwest Harbor and adjacent islands. It will achieve this mission by gathering, cataloging, preserving, and making available to the public historical materials, such as genealogies and information showing the growth and development of the towns, as well as artifacts.

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