

The Newsletter of the Tremont Historical Society

Vol. 10 No. 2

Spring 2007

Published periodically at Bass Harbor, Maine. The Society is a non-profit organization, whose officers are: Arlene Bartlett, President; Charles Liebow, Vice President; John MacDuffie, Secretary; and Michael Smith, Treasurer. The Newsletter is ordinarily mailed to members and contributors.

From the President's Desk

This will be my last letter to all who read our Newsletter. It has been an enjoyable six years for me, serving as President of the Tremont Historical Society, as well as an education! To be truthful, the decision to retire was not an easy one, but all good things must come to an end. My husband Bob and I both agree it is time for younger people to take the reins and engage in what we consider to have been a very interesting learning experience.

We have in Tremont a museum that is growing in many ways. One of the things to be proud of is that the building is in the best condition it has ever been. People have also donated many interesting artifacts, and visitors have increased.

Before I sign off I would like to thank my husband Bob for all his help in this project over the years. Thanks to the Board of Directors for putting up with me through the easy times and the not so easy. To all of you who contributed and donated items to the museum—many thanks.

The generous folks who have given their time to act as hosts and interpreters during the museum's open hours deserve special thanks and appreciation. We could not serve our visitors without you!

And last but not least, my gratitude to those who so willingly answered my call to serve as speakers for our programs. You were great—I did not have one refusal since I started doing programming in 1999.

Until we meet again, may God bless.

Sincerely,

Arlene Bartlett, President
244-5268

"Let's Ask Ralph!"

We have initiated a new feature in our Newsletters. Questions of various sorts are posed, sometimes by your Editor and sometimes by you—and these go to our Historian, Ralph Stanley.

Last time, we said "Let's Ask Ralph" the following:

1. Among materials for shipbuilding described in your your story about "Shipbuilding on Mt. Desert.", "rails," "wales" and "trunnels" are included. Can you define these for us?

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Rails would be the heavy timbers around the topsides, which protect the vessel from damage when lying alongside a wharf. *Wales* are planks for the sides of the vessel. *Trunnels* are wooden dowels (“tree nails”) used to fasten the wales to the ribs, or frames, in earlier times when iron nails were too expensive to be used in ship construction.

2. In the harrowing tale of a shipwreck included in your story, it was stated that the vessel was “steered by hawser.” Can you explain how this was done?
When the rudder was broken or lost, it was possible to trail a heavy rope over the stern in a storm, and attach it on one side or the other so the drag would pull the stern to port or starboard and steer the ship.
3. In the story about the loss of the “Fannie Earl,” it appeared that the captain and mate, who were rescued together by a passing steamer, must have arrived home by different means, as the story in the Bar Harbor Record says that Capt. Stanley arrived in Philadelphia on the steamer “Chesapeake” while Mate William F. Hanna arrived in New York. How could this be?

Even though the captain and the mate were the only crew of the “Fannie Earl” there was still a gulf between the captain and any other sailor on a vessel. So the writer of the story sent to the Bar Harbor Times gave more details about the captain’s return trip. In fact, both men were rescued by the “Chesapeake” which first completed her journey to London and then returned to Philadelphia. She must have stopped in New York five days earlier, as the mate was reported to have arrived there and immediately shipped out on a schooner bound for New Bedford. If we need to guess what Capt. Stanley did, it would not be strange to surmise that, as he was given comfortable quarters and good food on the “Chesapeake,” he stayed aboard, enjoyed the five days of additional hospitality accorded him, and perhaps visited for a while in Philadelphia to recover from the stress of losing his command at sea. The captain could afford a bit of “down time” while the mate needed to get back home to find another vessel and get to work!

(The foregoing is phrased by the Editor from a conversation with Historian, Author, Speaker, and Fiddler Ralph Stanley.)

RALPH’S PAGE

Being a reproduction of articles of historical interest, selected by Ralph Stanley

from The Mt. Desert Herald, June 21, 1889

When I Was a Boy

By H.M. Eaton

I had an experience on the water that cannot be erased from my mind. It was sixty-one years ago last April. It occurred soon after the lighthouse was built on Mt. Desert Rock. The keeper of that light went to Portland for supplies for his family, and to obtain a boat suitable for his use at the Rock. The boat and goods were landed at Bass Harbor. I was at my father’s that spring, and the keeper of the light came there and wanted my father to let me go to the Rock with him for he dare not go alone, not being much accustomed to managing boats. It was finally agreed that I should go with him, and my father was to go in his own boat and take me back. The price agreed upon was seven dollars. We left Bass Harbor soon after dinner. The wind was fair, and blowing a good breeze. When we had gone a few miles there was a dead calm. Soon after leaving the Harbor, the keeper of the light said, “I have been drinking wine and it has made my head ache; I guess I will take a little brandy to settle my head.” He took the brandy, and it not only “settled his head,” but

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it settled the whole of him to the bottom of the boat, and he lay there till we reached the Rock, at eight o'clock in the evening! I had to row the boat the last ten miles with one oar and steer against the oar, for the boat was not built for one person to row "cross-handed" or "open-handed." The keeper didn't speak the whole afternoon, and didn't know when we landed. Fortunately, men on the Rock saw us coming and were at the shore to tell us where to land. I was never in a light-house before, and have never desired to go there again. The next day we returned home with a fair wind and enough of it. We thought it was by no means safe to have a man in charge of that light-house who drank to such an excess.

When I was a boy, they held the town meetings in school-houses. Then, Mount Desert embraced Mt. Desert, Tremont, and many of the adjacent islands such as the two Cranberry Islands, Sutton's Island, Gott's Island, Tinker's Island, and I think some others. The town meeting was frequently held in the Norwood's Cove school-house. For some years the town meeting was opened with prayer. Near the school-house was a man selling Medford rum at three cents a glass, from a keg that held ten gallons or more. Many of the voters considered that keg of Medford rum as essential as the prayer. Indeed it had more spirit in it, and that was the kind of spirit that some of them wanted to be filled with. About all the voters came under its influence to some extent. It didn't take the whole day to sell ten gallons of rum by the glass. He was located near a little brook, and the customers could supply themselves with water. The trader furnished the rum and molasses. Mount Deserters would not tolerate such proceedings now. They are as far above it as any people in New England.

When I was a boy, rum was the one thing indispensable, on any and every occasion. When young men and women met to wash a school room floor, it was necessary to have a two quart jug filled with "old Medford," to keep them from taking cold.

A man whom I well knew would get drunk when he had money to buy liquor. His wife was a hard-working woman and was the main support of the family. He came to my grandmother's one day to sell her his wife's candle moulds. She knew full well that he was robbing his wife and would spend the money for rum. She refused to buy them and advised him to carry them back to his wife. He sold them to someone, and bought rum enough to have a first-class drunk. He laid his head on a chopping block in his own dooryard and asked a neighbor to "take a broad ax and cut his head off above his eyes, that he might see his Maker when he died." Poor drunken fool! I don't know as this man ever reformed. I left the island fifty-five years ago, and he was a drinking man then. He had a respectable father, a good mother, and one of the best of wives. Had it not been for his drunken career, the family would have been one of the best and most influential in that neighborhood. They were kept very poor and never mingled in society. "Rum did it." +

Let's Ask Ralph!

In the story above, Mr. Eaton refers to a method of rowing. He says he was required to "row with one oar and steer against the other, for the boat was not built for one person to row 'cross-handed' or 'open-handed.'" Please, Ralph, explain the entire meaning of this sentence!

A Bit of World War II History from Harold Beal

The following comments were provided by Harold Beal '44 to the Pemetic High School Alumni Association newsletter "Pow-Wow" recently. They are reprinted here with permission.

Thought I might add a little something you might find interesting. A lot of the younger generation has asked me about a few things that happened around here in the early 40's.

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When I got out of the Navy in 1946 my father had three boats that went herring fishing. I went aboard one that tended Bunkers Head Cove, on the east side of Islesford. Just south of Bunkers Head, by Mash Head, I saw some wreckage of a Navy blimp. This could have been the one Wayne Gilley '65 referred to above. I asked some of the fishermen in our group about it and they said it had been shot down by a German sub. They said they didn't know what happened to the crew. This also could have been the crew that Barbara Somes Ball '43 referred to in the January Pow-Wow. Dad told me about a lot of things that happened out there, in the early 40's while I was gone.

He said the Germans would surface by a dragger and take the fuel off them. Then they would let the men get in their dory, (most all draggers carried one on the roof of their pilot house), and then after they got clear they would sink the dragger.

He said one day, after they had set their trawls, they spotted a lot of 3 inch southern pine planks floating in the water just outside of them. They evidently came from a freighter that had been sunk. He said he and a couple of other boats that fished for him, loaded all the planks on their boats that they could carry and brought them in to Dad's wharf where he used them for wharf repairs. The next day they went back out and hauled their trawls.

He told me that one night, about midnight, he and my uncle Ralph Ellis were coming in with a load of fish from off shore (they used to fish 15 or 20 miles out.) Naturally no one was allowed to use running lights on their boats during the war. Dad was at the helm, and it was a very dark night, all of a sudden Ralph spotted a tanker just off the starboard bow. It was headed right across their bow. He didn't have time to warn Dad, so he grabbed the wheel and rolled it down hard to port. He said they could have reached out and touched the tanker as it went by. The tanker was loaded, as it was deep in the water, and if it had hit them they probably wouldn't have survived.

Dad said one day one of his fishermen spotted a body floating nearby. They were not allowed to take it on board so they tied it up good and towed it to the Coast Guard Base in S.W. Hbr. They found out later it had foreign papers on it so it probably came off a freighter that had been sunk outside.

Through 1942 & 1943 we lost a lot of tankers and freighters off our coast, a lot of them not far from Mt. Desert Island.

In those days we had to have an identification card with your picture on it, we got it from the Coast Guard. I think it was called a Captain of Port card. I had to have it to get on the fish wharves in Portland. They had all the wharves guarded because of the shipyard across the harbor in So. Portland. I hauled fish to Portland for my father before I went into the Navy in Dec. 1942.

While I was driving truck for Dad we had to have our headlights painted black, on the top half, and we had to run with parking lights on from Yarmouth into Portland. As I recall the speed limit was 45 MPH then, if you could get going that fast. People don't believe it when I tell them it used to take me 10 hours to drive the 163 miles from S.W. Hbr, to Portland in those days. If I left home at 10 p.m. I would get to Portland about 8 the next morning, unload my fish, put the empty barrels back on and leave about 10 a.m. and not get home until 8 p.m. that night, 22 hours round trip. In those days you went through every town and the roads were narrow and very crooked. With a 100 horse motor we were slow on all the hills, and they were plentiful.

One night my brother Buzz and I were going to Portland and Buzz was going a little over the 45 limit and we were stopped by a state trooper. He said to Buzz, "You didn't pass any planes on the road, did you?" Buzz said, "I guess I was going a little over the speed limit but I don't think I was going that fast." The trooper laughed and said, "No, a small plane went down up north and they had taken the wings off and put it on a truck, now they can't find the truck."

Guess I've rambled on enough for now. I love to talk about the good old days. Nobody had anything back then but we were happy and as kids we all enjoyed what little we did have. A lot of families were bigger in the old days, most with six or eight kids, and they had a lot of love for one another too. +

AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF SAMUEL K BRACKET, MARINER

by Malcolm A. MacDuffie

The following is the first installment in a three-part story which my father wrote for an English class at M.I.T. in about 1923. My father was the son of long-time summer visitors to Southwest Harbor, John and Abby MacDuffie, who were founders and proprietors of the MacDuffie School for Girls in Springfield Mass. He and my mother taught there, and later he studied at Bangor Theological Seminary and served several churches in Maine. Malcolm MacDuffie never went to sea, except as a devoted small-boat sailor in the waters around MDI, though as a child he rode the steam-boats from Boston to Rockland and on to Mt. Desert. But he feasted on sea stories all his life, and cultivated not only knowledge and imagination but a writing style which gave him the ability to evoke the life of vessels and their crews which has always seemed to me remarkable. But then, he was my father! *The Editor*

The *Sam K. Bracket* lay alongside the soggy and shattered old wharf at the head of The Harbor. It was so foggy that the masts seemed to have poked themselves through the damp blanket and so disappeared from sight, and the light from the cabin skylight was reflected in a sort of worn-looking, brass-soft halo which seemed as much in place as though it circled the head of a portly saint.

Directly beneath the skylight and consequently beneath the halo already described, sat Captain Sam K. Bracket in the flesh upon a low stool. His trousers were rolled up, the better to expose a pair of large, red and bulbous feet to the easing properties of a tub of warm water in which they rested. The captain was a small man and as he sat thus, chin in hands, suspenders slacked off, his white hair of fox-terrier consistency contrasting sharply with a beet-red face, he looked a little like a schoolboy, put on the dunce stool a half-century ago and then forgotten by his teacher.

He was talking pretty steadily to his mate and crew, a gentleman whose back could be dimly made out as he reclined in the low, dark alcove of the starboard berth.

“Yis,” pursued the captain, “T’was ’99 and the war hed been goin’ fer quite a piece. The old lady hed twins the same day the *Maine* went to glory. While the neighbors was wonderin’ if the Spanish gunboats would make a special trip to blow up the porgy factory that was then the pride of Jonesport, I was makin’ three guesses at how to purvide fer two blessings where, being natcherly careless, I’d only figgered on one. But I was soople, Lord but I was soople them days, so I went off aboard a hooker with Peter Tugger (he’s dead now) fer skipper. We hed some brick on deck and it came on t’ blow, but never mind that right now. Well, we fetched down on one tack and we made about and got a slant for Swan’s Island where the brick was goin’ and finally anchored in the bight that’s the harbor. Come high water and we snugged her up to the wharf—none of yer naphy yawl-boats in them days—and we and the brick man hove the stuff out of her, soggy but safe, onto the pier.

“It seems that this brick feller was a kind of seelect man on Swan’s and did a lot of business fer other people, for before long, he had argued the old man inter signin’ on a load of ‘farm utensils and produce’ for Kennebunk. Well, come mornin’ and bricky hove down, bringin’ his deck-load with him. He was lookin’ a bit sheepish and well he might for there was full twenty of ‘em—sheep I mean—to say nothin’ of two likely heifers and this bullock thing that was to cause us so much trouble. He was an elegant creatur’ with a big, blunt head and a white star between his splittin’ prongs, his nice red coat standin’ out very pretty against two ton of hay, twelve cord of wood and seemed like a thousand little punkins all piled up real ornate. I don’t guess the old man ever saw thet hay or kindlin’ or punkins, all he saw was them cattle, and his face got red and his eyes watered and his hands clenched as if he was seein’ sperrits. He was might proud of his old basket—keepin’ her neat and all—and I could see the thought of them messy animals bein’ aboard of him was wearin’ him down by inches.

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“He tried to bluster the island feller a might, but he was a mulish sort and only said, ‘Them cows and such is farm utensils just as much as yonder hayrakes (there were two of ‘em with big red wheels;) you use ‘em on the farm, utensils, see, and it was for utensils you agreed.’ And that shut up the old man. By next night high tide we hed ‘em all aboard, the hay rakes and the hay forrard, the punkins and the sheep and the wood below and amidships in two nice cribs, the heifers and this he-cow. When all was done, the skipper inspected the zoo part of the vessel standin’ on the house with his hand clapped to his nose. It looked remarkable snug and homelike to me—the deck-load, I mean.”

To be continued.

A SPECIAL EVENT TO COME

Mr. & Mrs. William Baker have notified the Tremont Historical Society of an occasion they will host this summer at their home in Tremont. They have called it “A Tremont Tribute.”

This will be **a musical afternoon from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 17th** at the Wilfred & Sarah Kittredge home across from the Tremont School, which is now the Baker residence.

Musical selections will feature songs from the 1940’s and 1950’s, including sing-alongs.

Mr. Dick Jordan and his sister, Joan Jordan Grant will honor their grandparents, Wilfred and Sarah Kittredge, as well as their dad Ray Jordan, piano-player and coach, and Evelyn Kittredge Jordan, their mom, for encouraging them in their musical beginnings..

The event will be held outdoors or in the parlor, as weather dictates. Refreshments will be served and a donation basket made available, as this is a benefit for the Tremont Historical Society.

All members and friends of the Historical Society, and guests, are invited to share this special event. Press releases will be published in the papers at a later time.

SPECIAL EVENT IN MAY!

On **Monday, May 21, at 7:00 p.m.** we are holding an Open House at the Country Store Museum, to honor our retiring President, Arlene Bartlett and her faithful husband Bob, who has handled the unofficial post of Maintenance Supervisor, for their service these past six years. We want to express our appreciation to these two for their many, many hours of work for our organization. At the same time, we want to invite folks from the area who may not have seen the Museum, to visit there and see what has been accomplished over these recent years.

SPECIAL JUNE PROGRAM

Professor Bill Baker will be our speaker on **Monday, June 25, 7:00 p.m.** at the Bass Harbor Memorial Library on the topic of “The Founding of the Episcopal Church in Seal Cove.”

And don’t forget our **Annual Meeting, Monday, July 22.** New officers will be elected, and we will be soliciting your ideas for the activities of THS in the coming year.

Editor's Note:

The following Response Form gives readers of the Newsletter an opportunity to show support for our work in recording Tremont history and making various artifacts and materials available to the public through the Country Store Museum. Membership by payment of dues is only one way of doing this. Another is by responding to our Annual Appeal each year in late summer or early fall. For those who live in the area, we invite your offer of time and effort to help by staffing the Museum or work in other areas of interest to you. Please let us know of your interest in contributing to the fulfillment of our Mission.

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RESPONSE FORM

Please clip and mail to Tremont Historical Society, P.O. Box 215, Bass Harbor ME 04653

Yes ___ I/we wish to begin membership in the Tremont Historical Society

Yes ___ I/we wish to renew membership for another year.

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$10.00 per person for annual dues.

Please make checks payable to Tremont Historical Society

Dues paid at any time of the year will provide membership status through the next June.

Contributions to the Annual Fund in any amount carry membership status until the following June.

Please list names of all persons for whom dues are paid, or all donors of contributions.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Check if this is a summer address _____ If different, please enter winter address below:

Address _____

If you would like to receive e-mail notices of meetings, etc. please enter address below.

E-mail address _____

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.

Tremont Historical Society
P.O. Box 215
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Organization
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SPRING 2007 NEWSLETTER

Prepared especially for