

The Newsletter of the Tremont Historical Society

Vol. 6 No. 1/2

Winter/Spring 2002

Published quarterly 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 Treasurer, Joe Marshall. The Newsletter is ordinarily mailed to members and contributors.

From the President's Desk

To the members and friends of Tremont Historical Society, here and beyond, greetings! Many of you are probably wondering what is going on and what has taken place with our renovation project since the last Newsletter. I will bring you up to date with plans and dates for the coming summer. Bob Bartlett, Building Committee chair pro tem, will inform you of the building details (see page 3.)

We have established Saturday, July 27 at 2:00 p.m. as Opening Day of the Bass Harbor Country Store Museum. There will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony and speakers. You are welcome to our open museum tour after the ribbon-cutting. There will also be light refreshments outside at the back of the building. Yes, parking will be a problem! If you are able, we suggest using the location of the old H.G. Reed Store at the top of the hill, and taking a short walk to and from the ceremony.

We have been very fortunate in the tradespeople who have worked on the building. They have been working hard during the winter under less than perfect conditions, and they have kept our costs low with their generous discounts. We want to express our thanks to them and all our volunteers with an Appreciation Luncheon at the Community Building on Saturday, July 13 at 12 noon. We invite everyone who has helped bring this project to fruition to attend as our guests.

We also need the help of our members and friends in providing all that these occasions will require to make them successful. Volunteers are needed to assist with the display and serving of man-sized buffet dishes, set-up and take-down of chairs and tables, transportation of chairs from the Fire House on Open House day, and of course moving of artifacts and records earlier in the season from the Historical Room at the Library to the Museum.

For those of you who are in the area, we would greatly appreciate your attending the business and planning meeting on May 27 at 7:00 p.m. at the Library. I'd be glad to speak with you about what is needed—you can call me at 244-5268, and leave a message.

This will be a very busy summer for us all, but I know it will be a rewarding one for Tremont and the area. Let's all help and add something nice to our town. It deserves it, don't you think?

Arlene Bartlett, President

Trivia Question: (from Fall issue)

Was there ever a woolen mill in Tremont?

(One elder resident said the answer to this question is "Yes." The Editor is still waiting for the rest of the answer: Where, when, who and how?)

RALPH'S PAGE

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

Letters to the Editor of the Mt. Desert Herald

Dec. 12, 1870 – Business On the Island

A stranger in sailing around Mt. Desert Island would naturally conclude that coasting and fishing constitute nearly the entire business of the people. Many have that impression now. I will give your readers a little information of what is done on the Island in addition to the coasting and fishing business.

On the Island are six saw-mills carried by water power, and one by steam. There are two grist-mills, nine lath and shingle mills, one woolen factory and one carding mill. There were built on the Island last year three new vessels, and four were thoroughly re-built. There are now on the stocks three vessels, and two more are to be "started" in the Spring. At S.W. Harbor is a lobster factory giving employment to about 60 "hands." There are eighteen stores, five millinery and fancy goods shops, seven dry goods peddlers, one stove and tin store, and some other places of business.

Nearly all the merchants are natives of the Island—smart, shrewd, and capable. They trade to make money, and are generally successful.

Yours, MUNSON.

New Bedford Mass. March 18, 1889

A man living near Somesville often amused me. He came to my grandfather's quite frequently and they talked over church matters, for he was a zealous member of the church. When he was about to leave the house grandfather would say to him, "Brother Richardson, will you have a drop of something to take before you leave?" And his answer invariably was, "Well, Parson, I don't drink very often but when I do, it's always about this time in the day." What amused me was, that it made no difference what time in the day he was there, the answer was always the same. He loved a glass of West India rum, as well as any man I ever saw who "didn't drink very often!"

The first Sunday-School on the north side of Southwest Harbor was established by a fine young lady named Mary Wasgatt, the eldest daughter of Davis Wasgatt and cousin to Bishop Clark. She was very intelligent and truly pious and much respected by the people. The school was held in the schoolhouse at Norwood's Cove. I attended it one Sunday and recited my scripture lesson, but was not allowed to go again for fear that I might play by the way, or laugh so as to be heard. I was then about ten yours old and very anxious to attend the school. Those were puritanic times! I was under law and not under grace.

The church people in those days thought a great deal of the "annual fast." One very good minister in town, named Norton, not only fasted himself, but his neighbors said that he compelled his cattle to fast; but the swine protested so vigorously that he was obliged to give them food to stop their noise. He was a very well meaning man, but was as terribly mistaken as some people are at this present day.

Well, Mr. Editor, times have changed for the better. Now, on that grand old Island are hundreds of horses and carriages, nice carriage roads, first class mail facilities, large and well-arranged school-houses, good churches, and all other things essential to real happiness in this life. The people have the reputation of being industrious and intelligent and not behind other communities in morals and religion. It affords me great pleasure to reflect on the changes, for the better, now enjoyed by the people of that Island.

H.M. EATON

(continued on page 6)

A Report on the Country Store Renovation

Since August 21st. 2001 when the Tremont Historical Society began its renovation of the Bass Harbor Country Store, the project has moved along at a steady pace with only a few small delays.

- The first major work accomplished was the new foundation under the two ells, pouring of the cellar floor and placing drainage around the foundation.
- A center floor support and lally columns installed.
- Chimney completely replaced.
- New wiring throughout the building installed.
- All plumbing roughed in; fixtures to be installed when they are received.
- Heating system boiler installed and radiant under-floor heat to main room 1st floor operating.
- Upstairs all walls have been replaced and two coats of primer painted.
- Fire retardant storage room installed upstairs for protection of important papers etc.
- The building completely insulated with 12" insulation blown in overhead and in north, east, and west walls of main building. Insulation also placed behind new sheet rock and wood paneling.
- West side entry door relocated to south side, with new door installed; all doorways enlarged for handicapped access.
- New spruce flooring floor installed upstairs.
- The former Grain Room completely paneled.

Jobs recently completed or currently in process are:

Installation of baseboard radiation upstairs and in bathroom.

Installation of French doors between the West side research room and adjacent work area.

Installation of sun shades over west-facing windows to protect displays.

Installation of new front (west) door.

Painting and floor finish, signs, vinyl siding repair, pump installation.

All indications are that we should have this work completed well in advance of opening.

Bob Bartlett for Building Committee

Editor's Note: In the Treasurer's report from the Board of Directors' meeting held May 13, 2002, Bob Bartlett reported that the cost of the Country Store renovation was nearly \$52,000 to date. A more detailed report will be given at the Annual Meeting on June 24th.

CENTENNIAL CLUB

The Board of Directors received a letter from Irving and Nancy Silverman at their Phoenix winter home, saying that for personal and health reasons they would no longer be able to provide leadership to the Centennial Club. The Board responded with regret, and with appreciation for the important contributions by the Club in recent years to the work of the Society.

The Centennial Club had functioned since 1995 as a committee of the Society. Its focus had been on the listing of homes in Tremont which are over 100 years old. Two very successful Historic House Tours were sponsored by the Club, and an informative booklet published to provide information about the listed homes. The most recent event sponsored by the Club was the establishment of a Sea Memorial at the Town Dock in Bernard, recognizing Tremont residents who had lost their lives at sea. An impressive Dedication Ceremony and Blessing of the Fleet was held in August 2001.

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THE OLD RED STORE

By Harvey Kelley

Located at the junction of the Bernard Road, Rice Road and Steamboat Wharf Road, this small building has been an important part of Bernard social and economic life for nearly a century and a half. It has served as a meat market, a general store, a post office, a radio shop, a pool hall, a barber shop and is currently a popular antique shop. Of interest from an historical viewpoint is the fact that through its many changes the store has been owned and operated by four generations of the founding family.

The Market, as it is still called by a few of the older generation—including the writer--was started by T.W. Jackson in approximately 1855 and named the T.W. Jackson Market. Mr. Jackson and his wife Ella, who was a member of the Benson family, lived in the white house next to the store occupied in recent decades by Clarence and Hazel Harding, then Bill and Martha Harding. The home, which was much larger than it is today, in earlier times was operated as a small hotel and named The Tremont House.

Very early in its existence The Market became the location of the Bernard Post Office, with second and third generation members of the family serving as postmasters.

An interesting feature of the building was that the rear section was constructed as an ice house to provide refrigeration for the meats which were a specialty of the business. February was ice-cutting time as giant cakes were cut from Dave's Pond and hauled up the hill to supply both the store and the icehouse for the fishwharf which is now the site of the Town Dock. Dave's Pond is the alder swamp along the south side of the Leffingwell Road, which was then cleared and a favorite skating place for both young and old. This writer remembers the mixed emotions of delight at watching the ice cutting and hauling, and the regret that the skating pond was not available during and for some time after the harvest.

Eventually Richard Jackson, T.W.'s son, opened the T.W. Jackson Market in Southwest Harbor, which is remembered by many as one of that town's most popular stores. Operation of the Bernard store and Post Office was taken over by Mabel Jackson Condon and her husband Herbert. During this period the upper floor with its outside stairway was used as a barber shop and pool hall which was operated by Harry Albee. The pool table was eventually moved to the F.W. Thurston wharf.

Still another change in operation of the store occurred when the Condons' daughter, Harriet, married William Hinton. William had been a radio technician at the Seawall Naval Radio Station during World War II, and radio sales and service were added to the offerings of The Market. Eventually, when Harriet Hinton gave up the position of postmistress, The Market once again changed its service to the town and became a successful antique shop under the guidance and ownership of Paul Hinton, son of Harriet and William Hinton—the fourth generation to make The Market an active part of the Bernard community.

Ed. Note: We are very interested in continuing this series about businesses which have been part of Tremont's history. For example, we know that there was a woolen mill on the west side of the island, because an early census report tells us that workers in such a business lived here; also, Mr. Eaton's letter to the Editor, printed elsewhere in this issue, makes reference to this mill. Can anyone give us any more information about it, or tell us where to go for such information?

Further, there were the boatbuilding shops of Cliff and Bobby Rich, Sim Davis, the "Rich Boys" in West Tremont and others; the P.W. Richardson General Store which occupied our Country Store building, the H.G. Reed Store, the Neptune Theatre, "Lottie Norwood's" and "Mrs. Mitchell's" neighborhood stores. Help us out! Nominate the businesses you'd like to read about, and contribute information that will help us to write the stories!

Centennial Club, *continued from page 3*

The Board of Directors would be glad to hear if there are persons who would like to establish a Centennial Committee within the Tremont Historical Society, to continue gathering data about historic homes throughout the area. We know there are residents of Southwest Harbor whose homes are more than 100 years old, and who would like to add them to the Centennial Roster. The Board will be glad to offer encouragement and support to such an activity if persons who have this interest will come forward.

NOVELS BY THE TREMONT WOMEN'S CLUB

The Tremont Women's Club existed from 1929 through the mid 1960s, and perhaps later. It was federated with the Mount Desert Island and Maine State Women's Clubs. Club members met twice a month from October through April. The meetings covered a broad range of subjects including such topics as home economics, Bible study, book reviews, music, poetry, current events and travel. In the 1943-44 and 1950-51 club years, the Women's Club wrote short novels, with each club member contributing a chapter. The novels are fun reading and one of the Tremont Historical Society's current projects is to publish them to allow everyone to enjoy them. We have obtained permission from the descendents of most of the writers to use their material. We need your help. If you know how to locate any descendents or relatives of any of these writers –

Alice (Mrs. Cass) Smith

Eva (Mrs. Oz) Tolman

Charlotte (Mrs. Louis) Norwood

Mrs. Flora Lawton

Mrs. Leila Wallace

– please contact Muriel Trask Davisson, P.O. Box 15, Bass Harbor, Maine 04653;

Telephone: 207-244-3826; email: mtd@jax.org.

Thank you to anyone who can help!

A MESSAGE TO READERS OF THE NEWSLETTER

Since we began publishing the Newsletter in 1997, we have used as our mailing list the membership list as it existed during those years—the list of all who had paid annual dues. In addition, in order to spread the news of our activities as widely as possible, we have sent the Newsletter to others who have at some time been involved or shown some interest—and people who have paid dues in the past but have not continued to pay annually. The list has hovered in the vicinity of 375 for the past year or two.

However, on this list there are now a considerable number of people who are not paying dues, while we are continuing to pay the cost of printing and mailing newsletters to them (you) four times each year. The cost for a 10-page newsletter, just for copying, is 40 cents. Mailing, even at the bulk rate, is an average of 12.5 cents per copy (and this will be going up soon.) So it costs us almost 53 cents an issue, or \$2.12 per year to send Newsletters to around 375 addresses—about \$795 per year. And that does not count volunteer time, computer time, printer costs, mailing labels.

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Ralph's Page

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June 7, 1899—When I Was a Boy (Seventh Paper)

We were accustomed to go to the top of a mountain about two or three miles from Southwest Harbor and pick blueberries and “high land” cranberries. One day Sally Sommers, a colored woman, was on the mountain and a man was there whom she very much disliked. In some way he had done her an injury and she wanted to be even with him. The man had a dog that he thought a good deal of. When Sally ate her lunch she called the dog to her and fed him. Then she threw a piece of bread from the top of the mountain and as the dog was looking for it she pushed him off, where the mountain was so steep that he probably didn't stop until he reached the water in Somes Sound. The dog was not seen after that. In my boyhood days the mountain was called “Dog Mountain,” and was known by no other name so long as I lived on the Island. It may be known by that name at the present day.

There was a Mr. Brown living at Southwest Harbor. The people generally called him “Beauty Brown.” I never knew his christian name. One day a stranger came to the place to buy a yoke of oxen. He was told by someone that “Beauty Brown” had a good yoke of oxen for sale. The stranger drove to Mr. Brown's house and rapped on the door. Mr. Brown put in an appearance at once. Said the stranger, “Does Mr. ‘Beauty Brown’ live here?” Brown answered in language far more forcible than pious and the poor fellow beat a hasty retreat and by so doing avoided personal injury. The two parties didn't talk oxen that day.

There was a man living in Southwest Harbor named Dr. Gouldsboro. He had the reputation of being very scholarly. He had no particular business and I never heard of his practicing medicine, though he claimed to have great skill. He was a drinking man and always had money enough to furnish himself liquor. Medford rum always troubled his legs more than his head. One day he obtained liquor on board a trading vessel and being too drunk to walk, he was assisted out of the vessel on to the land. Being unable to stand he *rolled* to his house which was nearby. I happened to be there and see the performance. It was sport for the boys.

The “Doctor” lettered the first guide board ever put up at Southwest Harbor. It stood very near Freeman's Hotel. It attracted considerable attention from the fact that he lettered backwards *i.e.* in lettering the board he commenced at the right hand! The doctor died many years ago. He was not a native of the Island, nor had he any relatives there except a wife.

A man on the south side of the Harbor went into the woods about forty rods to get a birch tree for firewood. He had a yoke of steers that were not well broken and while he was cutting a notch in the stick to drive in the hook of the chain, he fastened the chain to one of his legs to keep the steers from running away. The steers started very suddenly and took him home in a few minutes in a very ungraceful manner. There was a few inched of newly fallen snow on the ground and he received no serious bruises. He never desired to ride after those steers again.

The principal blacksmith in what is now Tremont, and the only one in the vicinity of Southwest Harbor, was Aaron Wasgatt. People from adjacent islands came to his shop to have iron work done. He had an apprentice named Welch Moore, who became a nice workman. There were two families of Newmans living at Southwest Harbor. They were ship-carpenters and enterprising men. Some of their sons were master ship-carpenters.

When I read of the prosperity of the people it gives me great joy.

H.M. EATON

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness and regret that we mark the recent passing of Nancy Silverman, beloved wife of Irving Silverman. A Memorial Service will be held on Thursday, June 20 at 5:00 p.m. at the Harding Wharf, next to the Lighthouse. All are welcome to attend.

To Our Readers

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The Board of Directors has suggested to the Editor that sometime soon the mailing list should be cut to include only persons who are paying dues or making donations to the Historical Society's treasury. We are not even sure that you who receive the Newsletter but are not helping to pay for it are interested—are reading the Newsletter—or are in favor of what we are doing!

We expect to use the mails for a heavy saturation of local post offices early this summer, as we prepare to open and dedicate the Country Store Museum in July. We hope that many people will become interested in the possibilities of visiting the Museum, perhaps doing research at the facility, perhaps sharing genealogical information so that we may keep this kind of information on our computer, or contributing artifacts for our displays. And we hope that many will want to pay dues or contribute to our Annual Appeal to help with the increasing operating expenses of the Society.

But we also expect to remove from our mailing list the names of those who are not showing support. So later this year, if you do not receive a Newsletter you will realize that your name is no longer on the mailing list. If you would not choose for that to happen, please use the response form below and return it to us with a contribution—either of dues at \$5 per person per year, or an amount to our Country Store Restoration Fund.

(And a word to the wise: the Board is recommending that for the coming year, 2002-2003, dues be increased to \$10 per person per year.)

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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 \$5.00 per person for annual dues.

Please make checks payable to Tremont Historical Society

Dues paid in 2001 or the first six months of 2002 will establish membership through June of 2002.

Yes ___ I/we wish to contribute \$ _____ to the Country Store Fund.

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

_____ Phone _____

Address _____

Street or Box # Town State Zip

Check if this is a summer address _____

If different, please enter winter address below:

Address _____

Street or Box # Town State Zip

MISSION STATEMENT
Adopted April 17, 2000
By the Board of Directors
Tremont Historical Society

This historical society shall be dedicated to the work of gathering, organizing, preserving, and making available to the public both historical materials and information showing the growth and development of the Town of Tremont including

- a) the early period during which it was a part of the Town of Mt. Desert Island, including the entire island and many of the adjacent islands;
- b) the period during which it included the area now known as the Town of Southwest Harbor;
- c) the period from the separation of Southwest Harbor to the present.

Tremont Historical Society
P.O. Box 215
Bass Harbor ME 04653

Non-Profit
Organization
Postage Paid
Bass Harbor ME
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Permit No. 7

Prepared especially for