

The Newsletter of the Tremont Historical Society

Vol. 12, No. 2

Winter 2009

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

(Picture of the steamboat wharf in Bernard here. Caption below.)

A photo by George Neal, about 1900, showing the steamboat wharf at the end of the road in Bernard which now bears its name. On the point to the left is the Try House where whales harpooned from rowing boats in the outer harbor were brought to "try out" the oil. To the right is the house where Charles Harding lived for many years, now owned by Irving Silverman. Behind it, above the roof, is the chimney of the Trask House still in that family. To the left in the middle foreground is the store and wharf operated by Harvey Kelley's grandfather, Daniel Benson, and the smaller building nearby, his "fish house." In the field, part of the Benson homestead, the tiny building is the well-house, replaced nowadays by a stone curbing and cover on the MacDuffie property. Two youngsters standing by the door must have been posed there by Dr. Neal as he prepared to take the picture. (One was Harvey Kelley's mother as a young girl.) This well from the beginning of this neighborhood in the early 19th century, provided water for up to a dozen families. It is still producing ample water, but for only one family, at today's much higher consumption rate.

The President's Page

Dear Fellow THS Members,

The Country Store Museum has completed another successful season. It was open Monday and Wednesday afternoons, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., from July 1st through Columbus Day. The number of visitors and the number of states and foreign countries represented was similar to the 2008 season.

Our monthly programs since the last newsletter included the annual meeting in July where Peter Blanchard spoke on "The Kellams of Placentia Island," based on their journals and his interviews with local residents. In August, Paul S. Richardson spoke about the history of bridges and carriage roads in Acadia National Park, based on his book, *The Creation and Growth of Acadia National Park*. In September, Judy Taylor gave a slide show on the mural she painted for the Maine Labor Department lobby in Augusta. In October, Ralph Stanley spoke about the changes in Southwest Harbor during the 1900's. And in November, representatives from the Bangor Family History Center of the Church of Latter Day Saints described their resources for genealogical research. This was particularly interesting as the Family History Center provides free access to several sites in the U.S., United Kingdom and Sweden that provide genealogical information, access to church records and census records. Detailed information on these resources is available in the research room at the Country Store Museum and may be accessed by contacting a THS board member.

Members present at the October meeting approved a Bylaws change that allows the annual review of the Treasurer's records to be done by another Board member rather than a licensed accountant or CPA, which will save the Society considerable money.

At the Annual Meeting in July, Treasurer Michael Smith gave a full-year report for 2008/09, with a few notes of explanation. He also presented a three-year comparison of finances, showing very favorable results in all categories. He explained that the Society's fiscal year is the calendar year. If anyone wants a financial report for the calendar year, they may contact him or the President.

The Tremont Historical Society became an official stamping site for the United States Lighthouse Society's lighthouse passport program, which gave us additional exposure. As a result the THS is listed on the web sites of Downeast Acadia Regional Tourism (<http://www.downeastacadia.com/search/>, <http://www.downeastacadia.com/search/>) and the U.S. Lighthouse Society (http://www.uslhs.org/passports_sites.php <http://www.uslhs.org/passports_sites.php>).

At the Annual Meeting the following slate of officers and directors for the ensuing year were elected:

.Officers:	President	Muriel Davisson
	Vice President	Charles Liebow
	Secretary	John MacDuffie
	Treasurer	Michael Smith
Directors for three years (expiring in 2012):		Priscilla Keene
		Jack Adams
		One open slot

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Other Board members whose terms are continuing are:

Juanita Stanley, David Lawson, Storey King (2010)

Virginia Libhart, Suzanne Madeira, Ralph Stanley (2011)

Notable acquisitions during the past months include the papers of Paul Hinton from Marty Lyons, the records of the Seal Cove Water Co. (1931-1979) from Eliot Paine & George Putnam, and 7 ledgers, probably from the Perry Richardson store (our current museum) from Everett Beers. The latter will be on display in the museum in 2010.

Finally, we have been working with Becky and John Burnham to obtain and place markers for Stephen and James Richardson, early settlers at Crockett Point, in the Crockett Point Cemetery.

I hope you all have a good winter, and look forward to seeing you at monthly Society meetings next year. Please contact me if you have suggestions for program topics. The Board strives to plan programs that will interest all THS members.

Sincerely,



Muriel Trask Davisson

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A Message from the Secretary and Newsletter Editor

Thanks to all who have responded to our Annual Appeal!

In November we mailed letters to 300 addressees on our mailing list, seeking contributions to help us continue operating the Country Store Museum and covering other expenses. The response so far has been excellent, and we hope that as others consider making year-end, tax-deductible contributions to worthy causes such as ours, we may also hear from you. We are also pleased that a number of folks have paid their dues for the coming year.

That being said, we'd like to mention that a number of folks to whom we send these Newsletters have not been paying dues or contributing to the Annual Appeal for several years. Because we must be good stewards of our funds, we will find it necessary to remove such names from the mailing list before the next Newsletter is prepared, in the early Spring.

John MacDuffie

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RALPH'S PAGE

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

The following items concerning the Steamboat Wharf at Bernard should arouse much interest:

Bar Harbor Record, Jan. 12, 1882

At a meeting of the stockholders of the Bass Harbor Steamboat Wharf Co. on Jan. 12th the following gentlemen were chosen Directors: G.L. Bray, P.W. Richardson, and Lewis Freeman. The annual meeting will be held Monday evening Jan. 23rd.

March 11, 1882

The timber is about all ready for the new steamboat wharf at Bass Harbor, and it is expected to be finished by the first of May. It is hoped that the directors of the several steamboat lines running so close by will not hesitate to stop their boats there. They have a prospect of quite a large business in freight and passengers, both in the immediate vicinity of the wharf and also from all the western side of the island.

Oct. 1, 1882

The steamboat wharf at Bass Harbor is progressing finely.

(another version found in these records has the last word spelled "finally." Noticing the dates and content of the previous items, which spelling do you think is correct? Ed.)

Faithful members of the Society will remember a program presented some years back by Harvey Kelley who traced the history of this Steamboat Wharf in greater detail. Though it was actually completed, it apparently failed to attract many stops by steamboats passing by, and failed as a business in about ten years. See page 7 for the first instalment of this talk by Harvey.

Bar Harbor Record, July 27, 1888

The Bass Harbor, Swan's Island, and Rockland Steamboat Co. has organized at Tremont, with capital stock of \$4,200, paid in \$2,000; par value of shares \$25. Willis Watson of Tremont is President, and C.H.S Webb, of Oceanville, Treasurer. The business to be prosecuted is to carry passengers and freight by steamboat between Rockland and Bass Harbor, and to and from other points in Maine and Massachusetts.

We believe that this later effort had no relationship to the former one. Perhaps they hoped to buy or lease the unused wharf, but to date we have found no record of the fate of this new endeavor. Ed.

Bar Harbor Record, Mar. 31, 1887

The *Lizzie Lee*, with a cargo of salt for the Banks fishery and 220 barrels of cement and some drain pipe for the new sewerage system of the village, left Boston on Thursday afternoon, bound for Bar Harbor.

All that day the weather was fine and the wind about northwest. About 2 o'clock the next morning the wind changed to the southward and by daylight was blowing a gale. The vessel was put under double reefed sails during the forenoon, and about noon, the wind coming off

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from the northwest, she stood in and made the Mt. Desert hills. A little before sunset, while wearing off Pettit Manaan, the main boom was carried away just abaft the jaws and swung in. It was immediately secured. The sea by this time was very high, and the vessel being very deep, a good deal of water came on board. A number of empty water barrels, which were stowed on deck, were lost.

All day Saturday she was head reaching under double reefed foresail and jib, the wind northwest and the sea running very hard. On Saturday night a dory, which was on deck, was lost; and the sea stove in the yawl boat which was hanging in the davits and carried her off, bending the davits all out of shape. Sunday morning owing to the rolling of the schooner, the fore boom was carried away near the jaws. The weather moderated during the forenoon and the fore boom was fished and the whole foresail set. About midnight, it breezed up from the southwest and by daylight Mt. Desert Rock was sighted. The staysail was then set and by noon she was anchored off Hardy's Point. The *Sebenoa* was hailed and the boat was sent out from shore to take the captain off. The crew were all very much fatigued, having been on deck most of the time. The vessel was all iced up forward so that the windlass had to be dug out before the anchor could be let go. She will be hauled in to the wharf as soon as practicable, discharge the cement and pipe, have the main boom fixed and proceed to Lamoine to fit up for the Banks.* Capt. Eugene L. Door, of Orland, is master of the schooner.

**I think the writer misconstrued the information. Usually the bankers from Lamoine went South to Virginia in the winter and carried oysters to Connecticut. R.W.S.*

"ISLESFORD COMMUNICATION" at unspecified date in 1913

Editor of the Record:

On a point off from Cranberry Isles, and between it and Islesford, called the Fish Point, lives a family, a man and his wife and five small children. The man was very sick, and they were destitute. People from both islands had to help them. When they needed anything the mother had to put a signal out, and men went from Islesford. One bitter cold day, all the bed clothes they had were on the sick man's bed, and these were very poor and thin.

The Life Saving Station crew heard of it and went to work and made two quilts. Some of the men used sail needles and some used darning needles for tacking the quilts. There are seven men beside the captain. They worked like busy bees, and put the quilts in the frames after dinner and at night they were all done and ready for use. They have a sewing machine at the station now. Where will you find a crew of men with any larger hearts, always ready to help those that are in want?

Capt. Everett Stanley, Oscar E. Jarvis, Albert W. Gilley, Nattie Alley, Austin Pettigrew, Calvin Norton, John M. Bunker, and Reuben Schwartz.

Gratitude.

BOAT SAVED AT ISLESFORD

Nervy Work of Husky and Able Islesford Fishermen Save a Valuable Craft from Destruction

About 9 o'clock Wednesday morning last week, Frank E. Stanley's 30-foot power sloop, worth \$4,000 broke away from her mooring and was drifting down through the fleet to what looked like certain destruction on that rocky point known as "The Head" when seen by some of the fishermen on shore. Two of the fishermen, Edson Stanley and Fred Phippen, both

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uncommonly strong active men, grabbed a rope and jumped into a rowboat, in which by chance an anchor had been left. They put off to the drifting sloop, threw over the anchor which on the way they had tied to one end of the rope, and tried to board the sloop with the other end to make it fast.

The sloop was so badly iced up that it was impossible to climb on board in the terrible wind and chop and as they were getting nearly to the end of the rope, Phippen resolved to make one mighty leap and either land inside the sloop or overboard.

He jumped and landed all in a heap inside the boat, and had just end enough left to his rope to take one turn around the mast and by using all his strength snubbed her with less than a foot of water under her keel.

They then succeeded in running another anchor and holding her until the life saving crew, with the help of the other fishermen, pounded her free of ice and warped her back to safety. Captain Stanley of the life-saving crew and a number of the fishermen froze their faces quite badly.

Two launches were sunk at Cranberry Isles, but the only boat to fill here was the new life saving service power surf boat which filled at her mooring for want of a spray hood.

BOAT SINKS UNDER HIM THREE MILES FROM LAND But Plucky Capt. Joy Saved the Mail

Capt. Arthur A. Joy, mail carrier on the water route between Cranberry Isles and Seal Harbor by way of Sutton and Islesford, had a desperate struggle with wind and sea on Monday, and although he saved his life and the mails, his staunch motor-boat, *Eleanor M. Joy*, valued at \$1,000 is sunk in 20 fathoms of water about a mile southeast of Bunker's Ledges, with a hole in her bottom.

Capt. Joy left Cranberry Isles post office at the usual hour Monday morning, making Islesford on time. When pulling away from the wharf his engine slowed down, and before he got it running right, his boat was driven quite a distance off the course and inshore. Capt. Joy felt the boat bump on bottom, but supposed it was nothing serious and headed her across the bay for Seal Harbor. When nearly half way over he was suddenly aware that his craft was aleak by the water coming into the standing room around his feet.

With a slashing northeaster blowing and a heavy sea on, it was a bad predicament but Capt. Joy is no quitter and he started to bail with a bait tub. The water gained at a rapid rate and soon drowned out his engine. Made helpless, the boat drifted rapidly out to sea before the gale. Despite all Capt. Joy could do, the water gained rapidly and soon was at the tops of his boots. Then he declared that his only chance was to abandon the craft, and throwing the mail bags into the small tender towing astern, he followed just as his boat gave a lurch and went down almost under him.

It was then up to him to row for shore, a three-mile fight directly in the teeth of the gale. Capt. Joy's middle name is nerve and grit, and he had made about a mile of the distance when he was picked up by Arthur Clements of Seal Harbor, who saw the mail-carrier's plight and put out to his assistance in his motor boat. Capt. Joy, wet to the skin and much exhausted, nevertheless delivered the mail to the postmaster here before he thought of any comforts for himself.

A telephone message to Deer Isle brought another boat over and the mail route will be kept up as usual.

I thought this collection of stories, as winter is setting in and the Christmas season approaching, might provide a few minutes of pleasant reading by the warm firesides of our members. I ought to pay tribute now to the devoted work of Ralph Stanley, who copied these many stories in longhand from the archives of the Bar Harbor Record. Ed.

THE BASS HARBOR STEAMBOAT WHARF CO.

Talk by Harvey Kelley at Tremont Historical Society

Nov. 25, 2002

At a weak moment some time ago, I volunteered to give a talk on the Bass Harbor Steamboat Wharf Co. As you know, we have a road here in Bernard which is called Steamboat Wharf Road--and for good reason. The steamboat wharf was a real local venture, and while the wharf itself was not all that successful as an economic venture, actually was quite definitely a failure, in the fact that the idea developed and was carried out locally, we have quite a reflection of the history of Bass Harbor, as part of the town of Tremont. It was definitely a local venture; nobody came forward with a large amount of money to build a wharf, no government agencies were tapped to provide the wharf; it was just a local feeling that we ought to have a steamboat wharf.

That in itself tells quite a good deal about the community, and not just this community but most of the coastal communities in Maine. If you talk transportation, up until you got into the 1900's, coastal towns depended upon the water for transportation. Some of you may have read John Richardson's *Steamboat Lore of the Penobscot*, and the number of vessels from ones that looked as if they were just big enough to float, all the way up to quite palatial steam passenger vessels--the number was tremendous. And, they did serve to pull the communities together, and connect them. They also served to connect the communities with larger centers where they could obtain products for expansion and where they could take products that they might have for sale. It was an easy proposition if you wanted to do anything in the way of commercial work or ordering materials: you ordered them from Bangor, Rockland, or Boston, and they came in by boat. Also on a smaller scale if you had relatives who lived up the river or up the bay or on one of the islands between here and Rockland, and you wanted to visit them, you hopped on a steamer and went, because you had daily service. For business people the steamboat became the way of life. It was about as easy back in the early 1900's and in the late 1800's, to go to Boston and have a full day among commercial ventures, banking and so on, as it is today by using the airport. The time that you'd be away from your business wasn't too much different. You boarded a steamer in SWH in the afternoon after you had better than half a day in your office, you arrived in Rockland in the late afternoon, transferred to a larger vessel and had a good meal, a good cabin, a good night's sleep, and you woke up in the morning at the foot of the business district in Boston. You had your day in Boston, and went back that night to the same cabin, on the same boat, and in the morning you did have to get up quite early, as you arrived then in Rockland and got aboard the very nice smaller steamboat, had a good breakfast, and you were back in SWH in late morning where you could catch up on that day's work.

The local visiting that I've mentioned, talking about family histories and relationships, and with practically all of the older families you find that your relatives were scattered along the Maine coast, and quite possibly some came from the Boston area. So you have to envision the fact that you faced the water, and you found yourself using it for many personal activities as well as, for many, finding a means to make a living. The number of steamboat lines operating were as numerous as there were entrepreneurs who managed to get hold of a steamboat and learn how to run it, and start travelling between certain towns or islands.

Another feature of the steamboat wharf development was the fact that it was a local enterprise during the period just before SWH separated from Tremont. SWH already had steamboat connections, and we did not. It's interesting that when you read the list of the people who developed the wharf, you see that it is a Bass Harbor group. They represented all three areas--McKinley, Head of the Harbor, and Bernard. The group of people who were active in the community at that time, some of them fishermen, some storekeepers, some interested in the legal side of things, did get together in about 1880-81, and formed a steamboat wharf company.

To be continued.

BOOKS FOR SALE!

As visitors to the Country Store Museum are aware, the Historical Society carries a number of books which we think might be of interest to folks near and far. Some are historical in nature; others are of various sorts, with Tremont authors. The Directors have recently decided to offer these books by mail to readers of the Newsletter. The following list will serve as your catalog.

Books Available from the Tremont Historical Society

Author	Title	Price	Plus 5% Tax
Dean Lunt	Hauling by Hand <i>History of Frenchboro</i>	25.00	26.25
Wayne Libhart	The Jury is Out The Jury is Excused	10.00 14.95	10.50 15.70
Virginia Libhart	The Enchanted Land Carrie's Dream Carrie Makes Waves Makin' Do	8.95 8.95 8.95 8.95	9.40 9.40 9.40 9.40
Ruth Grierson	A is for Acadia	15.95	16.75
Ruth Moore	The Weir Spoonhandle The Fire Balloon Candlemas Bay Speak to the Winds A Walk Down Main Street Tired Apple Tree (poems)	10.95 10.95 15.00 10.95 10.95 10.95 8.50	11.50 11.50 15.75 11.50 11.50 11.50 8.90
<i>Native of Gott's Island, whose novels received the following plaudit from the New York Times: "It is doubtful if any American writer has ever done a better job of communicating a people, their talk, their thoughts, their geography and their way of life."</i>			
Sven Davisson, Ed.	Foley Craddock <i>Stories by Ruth Moore and Eleanor Mayo</i>	14.95	15.70
Sandy Phippen, Ed.	High Clouds <i>Letters of Ruth Moore</i>	16.95	17.80
Wendell Seavey	Working the Sea <i>Autobiographical</i>	15.95	16.75
Tremont Women's Club Muriel Trask Davisson, Ed.	Two Tall Tales <i>Serially written by 24 members of the Tremont Women's Club, 1940's and '50's</i>	9.95	10.45

Craig Milner & Ralph Stanley	Ralph Stanley: Tales of a Maine Boat Builder	24.95	26.20
Raymond C. S. Finney	Summers with Percy <i>A Biography of Percy Reed</i>	15.00	15.75

Book Orders should be sent to Tremont Historical Society, P.O. Box 215, Bass Harbor ME 04653. Please add shipping costs of \$3.00 per book, and 50 cents for each additional book in the same order.

We also have many copies of a booklet published in 1998, "The Historic Homes of the Town of Tremont," with photos and historical facts on 85 structures in the Town of Tremont. These booklets are available free on request. If mailed, we ask for a donation of \$1 to cover mailing costs.

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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Non-Profit
Organization
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WINTER 2009 NEWSLETTER