

# The Newsletter of the Tremont Historical Society

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

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Photo by Priscilla Keene

*Stones placed in the Crockett Cemetery, Bernard, and dedicated on Sept. 24. A good group of over 20 people came from near and far to recognize these early settlers. Becky and John Burnham of Southwest Harbor had done the research, secured the stones via government support, arranged for them to be set, and also prepared the genealogical information on these two Richardson brothers. See a digest of their information, shared at the dedication ceremony, inside. A second installment of this story will appear in the next issue.*

## **Dedication Ceremony for Memorial Stones at Crockett Point Cemetery, Bernard, for Thomas and Stephen Richardson, Revolutionary War Veterans**

We are here today to honor the memory and service of two of the Richardson brothers, early Mt. Desert settlers, Stephen and Thomas. Some of you here today may descend from one of the five Richardson brothers, James, Stephen, Thomas, Elijah or Hugh through their parents, Stephen and Jane (Montgomery) Richardson. Both Stephen and Thomas and their families lived here in Tremont. They married sisters, daughters of Daniel Gott who was another early settler of MDI, living on Gott's Island.

With extensive research John and Becky (Dow) Burnham found that they could trace John's family through Thomas, and Becky's family through his brother Stephen. Both men did Patriotic Service during the Revolutionary War. Their final resting places, here, were recognized and marked by both the DAR - Daughters of the American Revolution Society in 1982, and the SAR - Sons of the American Revolution Society about 1976.

This family cemetery, set aside by early deeds, being about 125 feet by 80 feet according to Tremont records, held these two men, their spouses and family members. The area has been nicely cared for by Ned Lawson each year and all year. The Burnhams, members of the Southwest Historical Society, met with members of our Tremont Historical Society. Together, especially with Muriel Davisson, they worked on details to honor these men today with actual cemetery stones. Government military stones were applied for, then proof of burial sites was provided. When all was accepted, Dunn's Monuments of Ellsworth received the stones and set them last July 28<sup>th</sup>. Now Becky will tell you about Stephen's military Patriotic Service and family.



*Several of those in attendance. Members of Southwest Harbor American Legion post participated.*

## **THOMAS RICHARDSON AND WIFE, MARGARET (GOTT)**

By Becky Burnham

Stephen and Jane (Montgomery) Richardson, after a short time in Gloucester, being more interested in farming than the life of the sea, went to Londonderry, New Hampshire, where they stayed. Children James and Stephen were with them. Sons Thomas, Elijah and Hugh were born later. This is the James Richardson, who, with wife, Rachel (Gott), and young Abraham Somes, and wife, settled in Somesville about 1761. Several years later Stephen and Thomas, and their wives Elizabeth and Margaret (Gott), sisters to James' wife, Rachel (Gott), joined James there. They both soon moved to what is now the Bass Harbor area of Tremont, built homes and raised their families. So, yes, three Gott sisters married three Richardson brothers.

Thomas and Margaret (Gott) Richardson had 13 children between 1764 and 1789: six sons and seven daughters named Thomas, Margaret, twins Esther and Sarah, Abraham, Enoch, 2 Moses who both died as infants, John, Rachel, Jane, Mary and Puah. As usual, not much was known of their daily lives, except planting, fishing and raising thirteen children must have taken most of their time. However, Thomas and James were prominent in religious matters and were members of the first religious organization on the island. James kept all the church records until his death 12 December 1807 in Somesville.

Tradition tells of a winter night when Thomas and Margaret were returning from a religious meeting, they saw a fire in the woods a distance before them. Knowing it had to be their home with the children there and fearing the worst, they sped home. Luckily both children were safe. In the late 1800's the burned remains still existed but the place is currently unknown.

Like his brother Stephen, Thomas was put on the Committee of Correspondence, Safety and Inspection during the organization of the "Plantations" in March 1776. He became a Selectman and helped guide the formation of the governing structure of Mt. Desert Island. Meetings were held at his brother Stephen's home. In this time frame during our Revolutionary War, these duties became accepted as Patriotic Service to our newly forming government. In April 1789 at the first meeting for Town organization all three brothers were elected to prominent positions. The records James kept of the various public meetings, still preserved but faded, show him to be a man "of some education and cultivation." His brothers probably also were as educated as he was.

We are indebted to this man and his family, many of whom still participate in Town and Island affairs. The records he carefully recorded for all time are available to us. The families have spread far and wide.

Jessup Memorial Library in Bar Harbor and the genealogy room at the Ellsworth Public Library have copies of the Richardson volumes done by David Swett, of Orrington, himself a Richardson descendent, that are quite extensive if you want to look up your own lines.

The JOHN AND HANNAH (RICHARDSON) GALLEY family material is available at the Mt. Desert Historical Society and the Maine Historical Society Library in Portland. Sources are included for proof of names, dates and places.



*From right, Past President Muriel Trask Davisson, Becky Burnham, John Burnham, other guests at the dedication event*

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## **FIDDLE MAKING**

by Ralph Stanley

As a small boy I liked to hear fiddle tunes on the radio. I sometimes could get a Canadian radio station that featured a lot of hornpipes, jigs and reels. My grandmother, Celestia (Dix) Robinson, had a violin that she had bought sometime before 1989 from Sears & Roebuck for five dollars. This violin was kept in its original cardboard case in the attic, and occasionally I would get her to bring it out and play a few tunes. I don't know if she ever had lessons but she played by ear. She could play tunes on the piano also by ear. After I learned to play some tunes on the fiddle she would play along with me on the piano. When she had a stroke and could no longer play, her sister Vienna (Dix) Lawler would sometimes play with me. They had a special way of playing chords that I have never heard anyone else do. A lot of people have played piano with me but not like they did. I don't know where they learned, but as teenagers they attended Coburn Classical Institute for two years and possibly learned there.

Growing up in Southwest Harbor there were so many things to do that kept me busy, music was not a top priority. However, I still liked to listen to old-time music. I think it was fifth grade in school that our teacher, Gladys Whitmore, tried to teach us the fundamentals of music, but it seemed to go in one ear and out the other.

In my first year at Ricker Junior College one of my classmates played the fiddle. Occasionally I would hear him playing jigs and reels and I thought, "I wish I could do that." When I got home I decided to see what I could do with my grandmother's fiddle. I think she showed me how to tune it and I got so I could pick out a few tunes by ear. I found some music to some more tunes I wanted to play but

couldn't read the music. I wished I had paid attention in fifth grade. I just happened to find in the back of Webster's Collegiate Dictionary a section on music. After studying it over a little, those fifth grade lessons all came back. I must have retained some of it as it passed through.

When I graduated from Ricker my mother bought me a violin and I continued to play and learn more tunes until I was stricken with a lung abscess and tuberculosis. While in the sanatorium, where I spent a year, I could not have my fiddle but I thought if I am ever able to get out of that place I would like to make a fiddle. My mother found a couple of books on violin making.

Upon finally getting out of the sanatorium, I set about finding some wood. I went to Robie Norwood looking for a piece of maple for the back and sides. The best thing he had was a stair tread of birch that came out of the Underwood cottage that they had torn down. He sold me the stair tread and I had a piece of Ponderosa pine for the top or belly that was left over from a cabin side of a boat that I had built. I found a piece of maple for the neck in our firewood pile. Violins are usually made with a maple back, sides and neck and a spruce top, but I had to make do with what I could find.

While making this first violin I traveled to Frankfort to see Allie Batchelder who made some nice violins. At this time I found him making a new violin, and he had one all finished that he had made for a professor at the University of Maine. This was in 1955 and he was getting five hundred dollars for that one. It looked so nice I hardly dared to touch it. I asked him about wood and he said, "Sonny, there is just as good wood growing in your back yard as there is anywhere." Mr. Batchelder was a blacksmith by trade, working in shipyards around Stockton Springs, but he made over one hundred violins.

Instead of the traditional scroll, I decided to carve a lion's head. What inspired me to do this was the lion's head on an old fiddle that was loaned to me by Sim Marshall. Sim was a stonemason and must have been in his eighties at the time. He liked fiddle music. I met an Irishman who worked at a summer cottage at Northeast Harbor who played the fiddle. This man weighed about three hundred pounds and had big hands with short stubby fingers, but he could really make them move while playing the fiddle. I took him to visit Sim a couple of times and he played Irish jigs and reels all evening long, not playing the same tune twice. Sim sure got a kick out of that.

I don't know where Sim got his old fiddle with the lion's head. I suspect that it was the fiddle made by George Bartlett at Bartlett's Island. I know he made a number of violins. This one must have been very old, as it had a short neck. At about the mid-nineteenth century the pitch of the note A above middle C was raised to a standard pitch of 440 vibrations per second, so that the necks of all the old violins had to be lengthened to accommodate the increase in pitch.

*This address, given by Ralph to the Historical Society in August 2011, will be concluded in the Spring 2012 issue of the Newsletter. along with some pictures of his violins. Ed.*

## **St. Columba's Chapel on Gott's Island**

Excerpts from Gott's Island, Maine: Its People 1880-1992 by Rita Johnson Kenway

Elizabeth S. Peterson came from Lansdowne, Philadelphia, PA about the turn of the century. Clarence Harding remembered that she and her mother boarded at the Gott house on the Point in Bernard before they moved to Gott's Island. She built her house on the shore at Gott's in about 1901 or 1902. It was designed by Charles Lawson, an 8-room, two-story structure with a gambrel roof, two large chimneys and a small porch at the front and back doors. Attractively sided with cedar shingles, beautifully silvered by salt air, it was an imposing sight, set as it was on a granite foundation just behind the ledges, but high enough to give an unobstructed view on three sides. There were the Duck Islands to

the east, the mountains of Mt. Desert Island strung out in a line across the bay to the north, and a view to Long Island to the south. Washing the spray from her windows must have been a constant chore, particularly after winter storms.



Although she attended the Methodist Episcopal Church which had been built on the island 1893 - 1894, Miss Peterson yearned for the familiar Episcopal service.

*Ed. Note: There is much more in Rita Kenway's book about Miss Peterson; and in Ruth Moore's book Speak to the Winds one can read a truly accurate description of Miss Peterson and her life on Gott's Island in the character of Miss Roxinda Greenwood. I heartily recommend that if you have read no other Ruth Moore book, you choose this one (and it is sold by our Tremont Historical Society for a modest price!)*

In 1913, Bishop Codman chose the Rev. William T. Forsythe to begin the *Southern Mount Desert Mission* of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Rev. Forsythe, born in England in 1860, attended St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, which was designed for the preparation of priests for work in the colonies. He immediately volunteered for work in Canada and served missions and churches in Quebec for sixteen years before coming to the United States. He served another fifteen years in Vermont before the appointment to this mission. The Bishop secured a rectory for the new missionary and his family in Southwest Harbor [*then a part of the Town of Tremont. Ed.*] and Mr. Forsythe started holding services there as well as building up the work in the important Seal Cove region.

At a meeting of area Episcopal communicants in 1914, a request was made for five year pledges to support the new missionary. Among the names of those pledging were Miss Elizabeth Peterson, pledging \$25.00 per year, and Miss Lucia Leffingwell, \$1.00 per year. Miss Peterson's dream of a church on Gott's Island began to come closer to reality.

There were no Episcopal Church buildings when he began serving the region. Very often Mr. Forsythe was the only minister on this part of Mount Desert Island during long periods of the winter, and he was called upon for burials and other services to people outside his own Church, willingly responding in all kinds of weather. The distance between his residence in Southwest Harbor and Seal Cove was about eight miles, over roads never the best, and in winter and spring almost impassable. There was a bed for

his use in Seal Cove when he could not return home. He maintained Sunday services in both missions (save on the few occasions when he allowed himself to be deterred by unusually stormy weather.) The trip always involved much time and great exposure; the devoted priest frequently walked between the two places.

St. Andrew's by the Lake was built in 1914 in Seal Cove.... St. Columba's Church was built on Gott's Island in 1916... St. John the Divine, Southwest Harbor, was the third part of the mission to have a building. It was first opened for service on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1918.

From the beginning of this mission, Miss Elizabeth Peterson had begun her quest for a little church on Gott's Island, even though the established Methodist Episcopal Church had been serving the community since it was built in 1894. She began by holding services in the school house with the first one officially recorded on August 2, 1914 when Mr. Forsythe baptized Alma Rachel Gott, 6, Fannie Elizabeth Gott, 4, and Hilda Erclyn Gott, 2, daughters of Collin and Elizabeth Gott. *[The records show that in the next two years 7 more children and 5 adults were baptized; and there were 5 confirmations.]*

Charles H. Harding, Cora I. Harding, Elizabeth S. Peterson, Mrs. Grace Gross and Ernest Harding were the original communicants of St. Columba's Church when it was formally established. Miss Peterson arranged for the purchase of a small plot of land from Margaret Trask for \$40. She collected money from individuals and missionary funds; a report detailed the following: Gifts for current expenses, \$48.60; for church building fund, \$543.87; grant from church building fund commission, \$200) \$792.48...total receipts \$838.11. Parish Property: Church material, wood; erected 1916; value \$800; number of sittings, 60. Amount of insurance \$600. Title vested in Trustees of Diocesan Funds.

[Miss Peterson] has been credited with providing the building, as well as the furnishings. Set on a small plot of land, 1/8 acre more or less, as the deed states, it was a simple rectangular building, sided with cedar shingles, and had square windows of textured amber glass. The exposed wall studs and roof timbers created a golden interior when the wood was all new. No photos exist of the interior of the chapel. Esther Moore Trask acknowledges that her sister, Ruth Moore, described the interior very accurately in her book, *Speak to the Winds*.



*"St. Columba" circa 1918*

Miss Peterson had created a hand-hooked, intricately patterned runner in glowing silk colors; it extended down the center aisle and another went across the front of the altar. The altar coverings were of a stiff, heavy cloth, which she had embroidered with many colorful religious symbols. The pews were crafted of the same golden pine and were made by the carpenters who had come over from the mainland to build the chapel. A small pump organ provided music for the services.

The first service was held in the new chapel on Sept. 17, 1916 by W.J. Forsythe, Missionary-in-Charge. Miss Peterson's dream was fulfilled. On that day, the baptism of eight-year-old Beatrice Elaine Boynton, daughter of the late Russell Everett Boynton and Grace Boynton Harding, was performed in the new facility, sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. I.H. Davidson. The official Episcopal Church records tell us that the consecration of the building was held August 6, 1917. Why the delay? The consecration of new churches such as this would have been postponed until the mortgage had been paid off. No official mortgage deed has been found, but this may have been the case.

Over the next four months, Mr. Forsythe's Baptism records read like the directory of Gott, Gross, Boynton and Sprague families.

*[No fewer than 14 children and two adults were baptized in this brief period of time.]*

It becomes very apparent that the introduction of this chapel took members from the established Methodist Church, setting neighbor against neighbor in their loyalties, one religion vying with the other. Some proud islanders were insulted by the idea of being served by a missionary. They had built and maintained their own church. They had contributed funds over the years to help maintain missionaries; now they were being called a mission. I understand that Miss Peterson came to recognize that it had been an unwise decision to bring another religion to the island. She could see how it had divided this small community.

#### *Fragments of subsequent history*

The Mission of St. Columba was not self-supporting, with total offerings per service being as little as 25 cents, or (once) as much as \$6.00! It was a labor of love for these devoted priests to bring services to the island, many times under uncertain weather conditions. During her lifetime, Miss Peterson took charge of services when no minister was able to come, and always had Sunday School for the children. She made pleated paper caps for the little girls to wear, explaining that ladies should not be in church without a hat, and urging them to wear their own hats.

Rachel Gott Francis told me that her family always went to the Episcopal Church in the morning and to the Methodist Church in the evening.... Contrary to popular belief, the Maine Seacoast Missionary Society in Bar Harbor has no record of bringing ministers to Gott's Island.

The Rev. Levine Chester Morrison became the missionary-in-charge in 1922. On Sept. 22 he held service on Saturday for 21 worshippers; the next morning there were three present for Communion; he wrote in his record "Miss Peterson paid boat hire!" On July 29<sup>th</sup> the 11:00 a.m. service was called off. He wrote: Went to McKinley. No boat. Preached ex-temp. to 10 men at L.F. Gott's Store."

The Tragedy! The first entry for 1925: "Friday, Jan. 30. Noon. Requiem for Miss Elizabeth S. Peterson. Burned to death, Jan. 29, 1925. Requiem Holy Communion for 1 participant."

Feb. 5, 1925 Thursday 2 p.m. Burial Service – 30 present – L.C. Morrison officiating. Burial and Committal. Ashes of late Miss Peterson. [Rachel Gott Francis remembers that service. Ashes and small pieces of bone filled a box no bigger than a kitchen match box.]



Feb. 5, 1925 was a sad day on Gott's Island, for the record also shows that Mr. Morrison assisted with the Methodist burial at 1:00 p.m. of William Harding at his home on Gott's Island.

From 1925 to 1940, no services were held. In 1940 the roof was repaired with a generous gift from Albert Lucas, and an evening service was held with 19 in attendance. The next occasion was a single service in 1941. In 1948 the building was cleaned up and one service held, but this effort did not continue.

**Afterword** by Rita Kenway

The old building stood deserted for years, the roof was starting to leak, the door stood ajar, dirt and cobwebs were everywhere. Outside the building, rugosa roses ran riot, and the spruce forest was beginning to encroach on the lot. I first entered in 1950 and sat on an old pew, trying to imagine what it had been like. Nothing remained of the runners or the linens made by Miss Peterson; undoubtedly they were removed when regular services were discontinued. A dusty hymn book remained on the music rack of the little pump organ; accomplished musicians could still coax a melody out of it. The bell in the little wooden belfry upon the roof was mute; the rope rotted away. A few years later, in 1955, we came back for summer vacation to find the bell mounted on a round wooden spool, the kind which originally would have held electric cable on the mainland. Very seriously, Mont Gott told us that the bell had fallen from the belfry, so he had brought it to the shore for safe keeping, "to be rung in emergencies only." Sure enough, one side of the belfry was missing its railing, but we don't believe for a moment that it had "fallen." The bell remains on the shore but is now less artistically mounted on a frame of two-by-fours.

There are several stories about the origin of this bell. One claim is that it came from an old ship; research shows that these bells were usually cast with the name of the vessel included. Another version says that it is the bell from the Methodist Church which burned. A careful study of the photo of the church shows the curved wheel-like frame which rotated as the rope was pulled, causing the clapper to strike the bell. This is St. Columba's bell, taken from its little cage. It did not fall!

In 1962, it was remembered by Virginia Holmes, a group of young summer people had been using the chapel for a gathering place. The next year, Arthur Silver (owner of the adjoining property, who had done some roof repairs) arranged for a Service of Deconsecration to be performed. Later that summer, an island-wide Talent Show was held in the building with a full house, rousing entertainment, and delicious refreshments including a "Gottsberry Pie" concocted by Mildred Hirsch.

Rachel Gott Francis was the high bidder for the property in 1966; subsequently the building was so badly deteriorated that it was demolished.

*Final Note by the Editor:*

*In 1953 when Marilyn and I were planning our wedding later in August, we hoped to use the chapel for the ceremony. It was in usable condition at the time, though would have needed extensive preparations. This plan ended when I was reminded that my grandmother, then nearing 80 and in frail health, would not have been able to attend under those circumstances. But as a fan of St. Columba and his Scottish roots on the Isle of Iona, I did grieve a bit to abandon this dream. JNM*

## BOOKS FOR SALE!

Author	Title	Price	Plus 5% Tax
<b>NEW!</b>			
Capt. Ray Williamson	Maine Windjammer Cruises	48.00	50.40
<i>Keeping the Tradition Alive</i>			
11" x 14" "coffee-table" book filled with photos of schooners in old and newer times, pursuing the windjammer trade pioneered by Capt. Frank Swift in the 1940's and thriving today.			
<b>DVD</b>			
<b>Chummy Rich: Maine Boatbuilder</b>		<b>Members 14.95</b>	<b>15.70</b>
<i>The Building of Andromeda</i>			
Peter B. Blanchard III	We Were an Island	27.95	29.35
Photos by David Graham			
<i>The Maine Life of Art &amp; Nan Kellam</i>			
Raymond C.S. Finney	Summers with Percy <i>A Biography of Percy Reed</i>	15.00	15.75
Dean Lunt	Hauling by Hand <i>History of Frenchboro</i>	25.00	26.25
Christina Gillis	<i>Writing on Stone</i>	24.95	26.20
Ruth Grierson (text) Richard Johnson (photos)	A is for Acadia	15.95	16.75
Wayne Libhart	The Jury is Out	10.00	10.50
	The Jury is Excused	14.95	15.70
Virginia Libhart	The Enchanted Land	8.95	9.40
	Carrie's Dream (ages 12-15)	8.95	9.40
	Carrie Makes Waves (ages 12-15)	8.95	9.40
	Makin' Do (ages 12-15)	8.95	9.40
Ruth Moore	The Weir	14.95	15.70
	Spoonhandle	13.95	14.65
	The Fire Balloon	15.00	15.75
	Candlemas Bay	10.95	11.50
	Speak to the Winds	10.95	11.50
	A Walk Down Main Street	10.95	11.50
	Time's Web ( <i>poems</i> )	13.95	14.65
<i>Native of Gott's Island, whose novels received the following plaudit from the New York Times:</i>			
<i>"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	14.95	15.70
<i>Stories by Ruth Moore and Eleanor Mayo</i>			

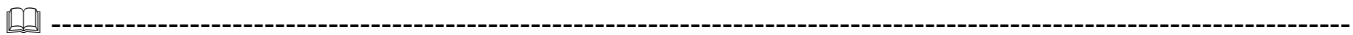
Sandy Phippen, Ed.	High Clouds	16.95	17.80
	<i>Letters of Ruth Moore</i>		
Paul S. Richardson	The Creation and Growth of Acadia National Park	29.95	31.45
Wendell Seavey	Working the Sea <i>Autobiographical</i>	15.95	16.75
Sheldon "Smitty" Smith	Memories of a Lifetime (poems)	10.00	10.50
Craig Milner & Ralph Stanley	Ralph Stanley: Tales of a Maine Boat Builder	24.95	26.20
Tremont Women's Club Muriel Trask Davisson, Ed.	Two Tall Tales	9.95	10.45
<i>Serially written by 24 members of the Tremont Women's Club, 1940's and '50's</i>			

**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.**

**The charge for shipping the Chummy Rich DVD is \$3.05.**

**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.*



## 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, or contributions to the Annual Fund in any amount, provide membership through the next June.

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

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address for meeting notices \_\_\_ or this Newsletter \_\_\_ (please check which)

**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.

**WINTER 2012 NEWSLETTER**

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Organization  
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04653  
Permit No. 7

Tremont Historical Society  
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