

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; Muriel Davisson, Secretary, Michael Smith, Treasurer. The Newsletter is mailed to members and contributors. Extra copies are available. Newsletter Editor is John MacDuffie.

HERE'S A LITTLE STORY THAT GOES ON AND ON

By John MacDuffie

I am the proud owner of a little power dory, 20' long, 5' beam, draft 18". She is powered nowadays with a 4 HP Acadia make-and-break engine, a two cycle one-lunger, turning about 700 rpm at full throttle, and meandering through the water at a steady 5 knots or so.. Here she is, on the way home from a family picnic on Sheep Island near Swans Island a couple of summers ago (Eagle Island in the background.).



Alan MacDuffie photo

Goslin was built in 1927 by the Cape Cod Shipbuilding Co. in Wareham, Mass. The photo shows that she is of the so-called Swampscott variety of dory, rather than the so-called Banks model such as you've seen filled with nets or squirming with live cod or haddock, or nested on the deck of a Gloucester fishing schooner. The dories developed by a builder in Swampscott were needed for ease of launching from beaches on Cape Cod, so were lighter and lower-sided. Many were constructed in the lap-strake manner, since such craft were less prone to leaking when kept out of water for long periods. Later, smooth-planked or carvel versions were built because they would always be kept afloat. At first they were all rowed, but later, sailing and powered models were developed for the pleasure-boating trade.

A Mr. Nalle, summer resident of Northeast Harbor, ordered this boat in 1927. The lore is that she arrived here on the steamer *J.T. Morse*, which like the Islesford Ferry of these times carried passengers and all kinds of freight along the coast. She was carried on the freight deck, and when she got to Northeast Harbor the captain asked the owner how he wanted her to be unloaded. "Why, launch her, of course!" was the reply. So the crew members simply shoved her off the deck into the harbor the way you'd launch a skiff from a float. But because she was a number of feet above water as she flew into the air, of course she assumed a more or less vertical position and acted more like a submarine than a buoyant, perky little craft bound for the joys of summers afloat. The old story my Dad told me was that she "immediately sank" but of course a boat made entirely of wood and having only a small marine engine in her would not sink. She'd just fill to the gunwales and wallow ignominiously.

But Mr. Nalle used his good judgment and took her to the Mt. Desert Yacht Yard for annual top-of-the-line maintenance and winter storage, where she was always known as "the Nalle dory" because he never managed to give her a name. I remember her there when, as a teen summer employee at that yard in 1947 and 1948 I was sent aboard to pump her when she was first launched each season, so she would not return to the shameful waterlogged state of her first launching 20 years before! She always swelled up in a few hours, of course, and was a fine little craft with her (then) varnished decks and coamings and her neat watermelon hood to keep the helmsman dry.

In 1967 Mr. Nalle decided to retire from boating, so he solved the problem of what to do with the boat he wouldn't be using any longer in much the same way he answered the question "How do you want to unload her?" He simply gave her to the proprietor of the yard where she had lived all those 40 Maine winters.

Now John Butler was a son of E. Farnham and Gladys Butler, and was now the proprietor of the yard—but also had grown up calling my Dad, Malcolm MacDuffie, "Uncle Malcolm." (His Dad and mine were boyhood friends.) John accepted the gift of the boat, but of course needed to find a new owner. A retired lobsterman had his eye on her, because he'd be hauling only a few traps there in Somes Sound, and she'd be ideal. But John thought she might not enjoy the indignity of being put to work in her old age, so he called my Dad. "Uncle Malcolm," he said, "I've got a boat here that is exactly what you need. I've had an offer of \$100 for her, so all you have to do is offer me \$125 and she's yours."

It was love at first sight, so the next 40 years of her life began with a move to Bass Harbor, a new engine, and after a few years of trying to maintain varnished surfaces that were past their prime, she got a healthy covering of Pettit Medium Buff as the photo shows. The last modification was the addition of a tiny cuddy forward, to create a square mounting for a modern type of dodger which greatly surpassed the watermelon hood for usability. Then when my Dad passed in 1976, she came to me.



Goslin at her Bass Harbor mooring

Now our tale comes to the present era. I've continued to enjoy this little boat for nearly 40 years. The major improvement I've installed is a fresh-water cooling system to preserve the cast-iron cylinder of my one-lunger, for with salt water 15 years is about the most one can expect to get from a gas engine. The present Acadia, always cooled with fresh, is 25 years old now and running like a clock. But other things have needed attention from time to time.

One such repair was a bracket to secure the rudder-post in the end of the skeg, where a hole had become a u-shaped cavity from years of wear. As I hunted through my collection of brass hardware and plumbing parts, I came upon a u-shaped brass bracket which I remembered was the original mounting to hold the forward ends of the watermelon hood bows. I had kept this safe for these 40 years because in a foolish, nostalgic way I kept thinking I might need a watermelon hood again someday—so better keep the bracket!

But this piece of brass (from 1927, mind you!) was exactly the right dimensions for the bracket I needed to fashion for my rudder post repair—except the distance between its two arms was 5" and it needed to be 2"! So I would have to cut out 3" and get someone to braze the two end pieces back together again to get that 2" space that would do the trick! Yet—to spoil that watermelon hood bracket, just to do this silly little job? I actually put the thing back in the collection box and searched some more for something else to work with. Then I remembered two pictures I'd seen when Nemo Blanchette gave us his sardine boat photo collection. Here is the first:



fish hawk in her younger days before the wheelhouse was moved aft

This is the *Fishhawk*, a rather handsome vessel that had brought countless loads of herring into Bass Harbor when I was a summer kid here in the 1940's, to give employment to scores of local women and put nutrition into the lunchboxes of thousands of hard-working men across the nation. She was distinctive because she had a forward pilot house instead of aft, and a raised deck to make a better forecastle for the crew's quarters. In addition, there was a row of good-sized round port-holes in that raised deck section, forward. Then aft she went straight back with an engine-room trunk cabin sporting a handsome stack, to a sort of fan-tail stern. It was a pleasure to see the old vessel, and the lettering on the photo told me something I'd never heard about—that sometime later they had moved her wheelhouse aft.

But here is the second picture I found:

Now we see the old *Fishhawk*, minus her pilot house, but still with those distinctive features of the forward and aft parts of her hull. She was under a wharf! Or, to be more precise, a wharf and a house had been built on top of her! When I asked our revered historian, Ralph Stanley, if he knew about this he said, Yes, he had seen her with his own eyes—and she was in Jonesport. I have to admit that my snobbish MDI attitude found this geographical note to be painful news!



I lamented to my wife, Betsy*, when I saw this picture, that it was the saddest thing I'd ever seen. For a grand old vessel like that, who had lived a useful, productive life for many years, to come to this! But she replied, "Isn't it better that she went on being useful, though in a different way, even when she could no longer go to sea?" I had to agree. And that is what I remembered when I went back and got that brass bracket from the watermelon hood, and without another thought, hack-sawed out those three un-needed inches and went to get it brazed by the ever-resourceful and skillful Chummy Rich.

That bracket fitted its intended location perfectly, now holds that rudder post precisely where it belongs, and is back as a vital part of the same blessed little boat that it served when she was first built!

Now as a retired country preacher, can you guess what I am thinking about this lesson that has come alive for me through this little story?

John MacDuffie

** To whom I have been happily married since March 11, 2015*



Viola Benson Watson photo

Here is one of those sad vessels whose useful days have passed, as she rests on the beach, no doubt awaiting the ship-wreckers. When I saw this photo, I immediately recognized the location. She is right in front of my house in Bernard, exactly where I beached my little power dory Goslin to fit that brass repair piece to the skeg! The bold ledge to the right is now directly under the kitchen of Thurston's Lobster Pound. The wharf from which the picture was taken is Benjamin Benson's wharf, now owned by his descendant, Ken Beal. Ed.

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A NEW AND EXCITING OPPORTUNITY!

We have recently entered into conversation with the man who bought the post office furnishings from the West Tremont Post Office after it closed. The story is that when Eleanor Murphy, postmaster, contacted the Postal Service to find out what she should do with these furnishings, they replied that only one drawer from the desk section was to be returned to officialdom. (*My guess: the "stamp drawer."* Ed.) The rest she was free to dispose of as she might wish.

Eleanor sold this equipment to a collector; he has kept it in storage until recently, when he contacted Muriel Davisson to see if we might have an interest in acquiring it. The portions of the set-up that he has offered include a desk and window section, and a bank of boxes with doors, combination locks, and on the “working” side, labels with names of local residents. A true and fascinating piece of Quiet Side history!

Visitors to the Museum well know that we already have a post office furnishing piece with a window and other authentic features—but this came from another community with which we have no ties. The Board has discussed in detail the proposal that we procure and install the West Tremont equipment to take its place. We are going forward working on the details in terms of space requirements etc. to accomplish this.

The cost to purchase the West Tremont Post Office furniture is \$800. We are inviting our members and friends to share in the project with donations of any size to help defray the cost. We expect to place our current exhibit in another museum, perhaps in the local area from which it came, with some financial remuneration which will also help meet this expense.

So—if you should wish to send a contribution, please mark your check’s memo line with “W. Tremont P.O.” to make sure we understand your intent. And thanks!

POST OFFICES HEREABOUTS

Your Editor has a habit of picking up ideas for Newsletters here and there according to what comes his way and also what causes him to prick up his ears and get interested!

Well, the article in this issue about the West Tremont P.O. equipment which we will soon exhibit at the Country Store Museum has accomplished this magical effect, and you can begin to expect an issue on this subject before long.

After all, most local people and many more who read the *Mt. Desert Islander* newspaper know that the so-called Old Red Store in Bernard, corner of Bernard, Steamboat Wharf and Rice Roads, has been undergoing renovations by its steward, Marty Lyons, and has recently re-opened as an internet café, arts and crafts venue, and historic exhibit space. Its own history includes service as a meat market, pool hall, barber shop, and—of course—Post Office! *

We have an old listing of Maine post offices, and Center, our earliest settled village, had a post office in its time of flourishing life. It is of course known by everyone that Seal Cove and Bass Harbor as well as Bernard still have functioning offices. Bernard contains still another former location whose appearance has changed but little since its heyday; and Bass Harbor has at least one, as well.

An avid reader of this publication has urged me repeatedly to do an article or three on our Tremont post offices, and this advice has finally sunk in. Watch for it, coming soon!

[*News flash! Marty Lyons will speak on this project on Sept. 28, 7:00 p.m. at the Bass Hbr. Library. He has some priceless photos to share, as well as his vision for the old place.](#)



Betsy Roberts photo

Do you know what and where this is? Please let the Editor know at redhousemaine@gmail.com

OTHER WAYS TO GET OUR NEWS AND SEE OUR ITEMS OF INTEREST!

Have you ever looked at our web-site? Our Vice President and information technology guru, Chuck Liebow, has been laboring for years on a web-site which by now has an incredible variety of information for you to access and enjoy at will. A great many of our past Newsletters are posted there, and new ones are added as they publish. Our vast and growing photo collection is appearing as quickly as Chuck has time to post them. Genealogy information as well. Take a look at www.tremontmainehistory.us and see what you think!

A word about this Newsletter. While we are collecting e-mail addresses as quickly as we can, the use of snail mail to send paper copies still reaches far more of our members and friends than the electronic method used by so many organizations nowadays. And the thing is this: the bulk mailing permit we use at the Bass Harbor Post Office is fairly inexpensive to use, but requires the mailing of at least 200 pieces each time we mail. So if we were to remove from that list everyone who has given us an e-mail address, we would very soon drop below 200 for the mailing permit and could not continue to hold it. Then, the folks who do not have or do not prefer to use e-mail could not receive our communications.

So we are continuing to mail the Newsletter by snail mail and do not find it onerous to do so, in the least. Along with many others, this Editor hopes the Postal Service will not die or be privatized as many fear will happen soon, so I use it as much as possible and have resisted installing a mail-box out on the road because I fear that the local venue might disappear if its services are no longer used.

We would like to have an e-mail notification system to alert local folks about our monthly program topics and speakers, but have so far too few addresses that would allow us to do this effectively. (Some of you may have been at meetings where I have begged people to write their e-mail addresses legibly so I can get them correctly on the computer and use them!) We'll keep on trying to get this method up and running.

The *Islander* weekly newspaper fills a vital role in getting the word out about programs on the fourth Monday. Once in a while for reasons unknown, the data we send them does not get printed. Recently when this happened, and we planned to air the Ralph Stanley bio *An Eye for Wood*, a couple of Board members hustled out with posters for local stores, and used another organization's e-mail list—and we had a full house of 41 folks to see the film! We were glad that such a thing could have been accomplished on short notice, and grateful for everyone who helped.

NEWS FOR THE BOOK-ISH

Recently, the Bass Harbor Memorial Library once again observed the birthday of Ruth Moore, the beloved aunt of our Secretary Muriel Davisson (in whose house Muriel lives) and the author of so many powerful Maine coast novels. This time, however, the focus of three evening programs was Ruth's long-time partner, Eleanor Mayo, who was also a writer of great skill. One evening's discussion was about Eleanor's novel *Turn Home*, in which a young war veteran returns to the town where he grew up, coping with the unfortunate facts that his family had not been the most successful or respected folk in those years and he had been a troublemaker as a teenager—and that he had gone away and come back, so making himself vulnerable to the suspicion locally that he was putting on airs with an appearance of respectability that home folks did not intend to acknowledge.

It was a fortunate circumstance that this novel and another from Eleanor's pen had recently been reprinted so they could be shared with a whole new generation of readers. (I myself had read and re-read *Turn Home* when it first came out, so this conversation was of special interest.) The second book, which was new to me, was called *October Fire* and was written against the backdrop of the 1947 forest fire which devastated so much of Mt. Desert Island. Rebel Satori Press, owned by Ruth's grand-nephew and Muriel Davisson's son, Sven, is the publisher of these absorbing reprints, so we are proud to be able, soon, to offer them in our collection of Maine-written works that will illuminate so much of what made our local culture unique and interesting. So, *Turn Home* and *October Fire* will soon appear on our list of books to be purchased at the Museum and by mail.

Also we have listed a new book, *Bar Harbor in the Roaring Twenties*, which includes several articles about our own "quiet side" of MDI as well. It is a carefully-researched and well-written history of a defined period in the long story of life on this island.

BOOKS FOR SALE!

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Plus 5.5% Tax</u>
Capt. Ray Williamson	Maine Windjammer Cruises <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.	48.00	50.64
DVD			
Chummy Rich: Maine Boatbuilder	Members	14.95	15.77
	<i>The Building of Andromeda</i>		
Peter B. Blanchard III Photos by David Graham	We Were an Island <i>The Maine Life of Art & Nan Kellam</i>	27.95	29.49
Raymond C.S. Finney	Summers with Percy <i>A Biography of Percy Reed</i>	15.00	15.83
Dean Lunt	Hauling by Hand <i>History of Frenchboro</i>	25.00	26.38
Christina Gillis	Writing on Stone <i>Gott's Island</i>	24.95	26.32
Ruth Grierson (text) Richard Johnson (photos)	A is for Acadia	15.95	16.83
Wayne Libhart	The Jury is Out The Jury is Excused	10.00 14.95	10.55 15.77
Virginia Libhart	The Enchanted Land Makin' Do (ages 12-15)	8.95 8.95	9.44 9.44
Ruth Moore	The Weir Spoonhandle The Fire Balloon Candlemas Bay Speak to the Winds A Walk Down Main Street Time's Web (<i>poems</i>)	14.95 13.95 15.00 10.95 10.95 10.95 13.95	15.77 14.72 15.83 11.55 11.55 11.55 14.72
<i>Ruth Moore, 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	15.77
Sandy Phippen, Ed. Paul S. Richardson	High Cloud- <i>Letters of Ruth Moore</i> The Creation and Growth of Acadia National Park	15.95 29.95	16.83 31.60

Wendell Seavey	NEW!	Working the Sea—Expanded version <i>Autobiographical</i>	15.95	16.83
Weslea Sidon		The Fool Sings (poetry)	16.00 (tax incl.)	
Sheldon "Smitty" Smith		Memories of a Lifetime (poems)	10.00	10.55
Craig Milner & Ralph Stanley		Ralph Stanley: Tales of a Maine Boat Builder	24.95	26.32
Tremont Women's Club Muriel Trask Davisson, Ed.		Two Tall Tales	9.95	10.50
		<i>Serially written by 24 members of the Tremont Women's Club, 1940's and '50's</i>		
Luann Yetter	NEW!	Bar Harbor in the Roaring Twenties	21.99	23.20

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

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

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