

Harpswell Historical Society

Newsletter

Winter 1999-2000

The Harpswell Historical Society is dedicated to the discovery, identification, collection, preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of materials relating to the history of Harpswell and its people.

Members and Friends of the Society

The Harpswell Historical Society is twenty-one years old this year. At this time it seems appropriate to remember the Organizing Committee from whose effort our Society was formed. Betsy Alexander, William Alexander, Delia Blanchette, Lena Everett Brown, John Dunlap, Jr., William N. Clee L. Miller and Sumner K. Wiley. For the Board of Directors as well as our members a sincere Thank You for your efforts.

You will find enclosed a little bit of Harpswell's history. "The Dead Ship of Harpswell" is certainly not Whittier's best known poem, but it is very much worth remembering here in Harpswell.

The Harpswell Historical Society has come a long way since its inception. We maintain and operate three buildings; we hold well-attended lectures; we have events in Town; we have a growing collection; and we have many good Friends in our extended family. In short We Done Good.

*Respectfully Submitted
David H. Hackett III*

Centennial Hall

History (of sorts) was made at Centennial Hall this summer. For the first time in the Hall's one hundred and twenty three year existence we have indoor plumbing! While no ceremony was observed, it will be to the relief of the members that this has been accomplished.

This summer the Hall has been used for a Wedding Reception, a Family Reunion, the Garden Club's Art and

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Flower Shows and the Society's Annual Meeting.

Centennial Hall has been a part of the fabric of life in Harpswell for many lifetimes. The hall has seen it's most dramatic changes in the past four years. In that short time the Hall's transition from an infrequently used building to the center of the Historic Park is a feat that speaks well of Harpswell's citizens.

Centennial Hall was first built during the celebration of our Nation's first hundred years. We hope to finish the restoration of the Hall by completing the ceiling and installing heat during the Millennium. Your donations help to assure that will happen.

District #2 School report

Our Society's School House was built about 173 years ago. It has been moved 4 times. The Town report for the year ending March 4, 1882 stated that "the District #2 School House has been repaired and the location changed. Although rather small it does very well for the present needs of the District." On March 6, 1911 Captain George Wilson wrote in his diary "Went to Town meeting. Voted to accept the Randell lot to build a New School on."



Work has been done to the school this year. Most noticeable is the removal of the two front windows and the partial reclapboarding of the front of the building. The interior partitions and kitchen have been removed. During this process the outlines of the wooden desks and their locations have become apparent making our job easier. It is also apparent that the interior partitions were made from the graffiti covered desks, making our job much more interesting.

Grade school students have not been a part of this building for more than 85 years. This will change in the spring of 2000. In a program being worked out Harpswell students will spend a day learning as students learned a very long time

The School will probably not be completely restored in 2000. Volunteers and donations are gladly accepted.

Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote "That a child's education should begin at least one hundred years before he is born." Our Society is helping to do just that.

Harpswell Historic Park: Thank you

This year, 1999, has been a very productive year. Centennial Hall has a handicapped accessible bathroom. The Harpswell Garden Club did a wonderful job landscaping the property. A total of \$8,122.90 was spent to do the bathroom, septic system/

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Proposed Amendments¹ to the by-laws of the Harpswell Historical Society

Article II

The purposes of the Society are fully described in the ~~second~~ article third article of the Articles of Incorporation, as amended 1 September 1983.

Article III

Sec. 7 Annual dues for the succeeding year shall be payable at the Annual Meeting, during that calendar year.

Article IV

~~Sec. 1 Regular meetings of the general membership of the Society shall be held quarterly.~~

Sec. 1 The annual meeting of the general membership shall be held once each year with two weeks prior notice.

~~Sec. 4 The Annual Meeting of the general membership shall be held in the summer.~~

Article V

~~Sec. 1 The Board of Directors shall be composed of twelve nine Directors elected by members of the Society plus one Selectman of the Town of Harpswell. Sec. 2 The elective Directors shall be chosen at the Annual Meeting for three year terms. Four being elected each year, except that the board may choose one or more additional Directors to serve the balance of an unexpired term or terms. No elective Director shall be elected for more than two three year terms in succession. The board may choose one or more additional directors to serve the balance of an unexpired term or terms and may appoint ad hoc directors to head special projects.~~

Sec. 3 In addition to the nine members of the Board of Directors, the board may elect as Honorary Directors ...

Sec. 4 The officers shall be a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer.... Each officer elected shall serve for one year or until election of a successor. ~~if that occurs before a year has elapsed.~~ Vacancies may be filled at any Public or board meeting. New officers will be installed immediately upon conclusion of the business portion of the annual meeting.

Sec. 6 Seven Three Directors shall constitute a

quorum at meetings of the Board. Directors are expected to attend a minimum of three board meetings per year.

Article VI

Sec. 4 The Treasurer shall be responsible for the safekeeping of Society funds, for maintaining adequate financial records, and shall deposit all monies with a reliable banking company in the name of the Harpswell Historical Society. The Treasurer shall prepare an annual budget in time for approval by the Board of Directors and presentation at the Annual Meeting. Monies shall be paid out by numbered checks signed by the Treasurer, or in the Treasurer's absence, by the President. The Treasurer shall collect dues and shall render an annual report based on the fiscal year, which shall run from July 1 to June 30. January 1 to December 31.

~~Sec. 6 No individual shall fill any given office for more than six successive years.~~

Article VII

~~- Library - collecting, cataloging, care, arrangement, and repair of books, manuscripts, newspapers, and other historical source material~~
~~- Museum - collecting, cataloging, cleaning, repair, and storage of historic objects; arranging exhibits, and the correct historical interpretation of these exhibits - care and upkeep of museum quarters.~~

- Collections - collecting, cataloging, cleaning, repair and storage of books, manuscripts, newspapers, and other historical source material and historical objects as well as arrangement and interpretation of exhibits. The committee will also be responsible for reviewing all loan applications for archival material and artifacts from other institutions and organizations.

Article X

Amendment to the Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended at any regular or special adjourned meeting of the general membership by a two thirds vote of those voting, provided notice was given to the general membership by mail at least one week prior to the vote. at the previous meeting. Or they may be amended at a special meeting called for that purpose, with one week's previous notice and a two-thirds vote. All proposed amendments shall be submitted in writing.

¹If you would like a complete copy of our by-laws, please include a stamped self-addressed envelope with your dues payment.

The Dead Ship of Harpswell

by John Greenleaf Whittier

What fleck's the outer gray beyond
The sundown's golden trail?
The white flash of a sea-bird's wing,
Or gleam of slanting sail?
Let young eyes watch from Neck and Point
And sea-worn elder pray, —
The ghost of what was once a ship
Is sailing up the bay!

From gray sea-fog, from icy drift,
From peril and from pain
The home bound fisher greets thy lights,
O hundred-harbored Maine !
But many a keel shall seaward turn,
And many a sail outstand,
When, tall and white, the Dead Ship looms
Against the dusk of land.

She rounds the headland's bristling pines;
She threads the isle-set bay;
No spur of breeze can speed her on,
Nor ebb of tide delay.
Old men shall still walk the Isle of Orr
Who tell her date and name,
Old shipwrights sit in Freeport yards
Who hewed her oaken frame.

What weary doom of baffled quest,
Thou sad sea-ghost, is thine?
What makes thee in the haunts of home
A wonder and a sign?
No foot is on thy silent deck,
Upon thy helm no hand;
No ripple hath the soundless wind
That smites thee from the land!

For never comes the ship to port,
Howe'er the breeze may be;
Just when she nears the waiting shore
She drifts again to sea.
No tack of sail, nor turn of helm,
No sheer of veering side;
Stern-fore she drives to sea and night,
Against the wind and tide.

In vain o'er Harpswell Neck the star
Of evening guides her in;
In vain for her the lamps are lit
Within thy tower, Seguin!
In vain the harbor-boat shall hail,
In vain the pilot call;
No hand shall reef her spectral sail,
Or let her anchor fall.

Shake, brown old wives, with dreary joy,
Your gray-head hints at ill;
And, over sick-beds whispering low,
Your prophecies fulfil.
Some home amid yon birchen trees
Shall drape its door with woe;
And slowly where the Dead Ship sails,
The burial boat shall row!

From Wolf Neck and from Flying Point,
From island and from main,
From Sheltered cove and tided creek,
Shall guide the funeral train.
The dead-boat with the bearers four,
The mourners at her stern, —
And one shall go the silent way
Who shall no more return!

And men shall sigh, and women weep,
Whose dear ones pale and pine,
And sadly over sunset seas
Await the ghostly sign.
They know not that its sails are filled
By pity's tender breath,
Nor see the Angel at the helm
Who steers the Ship of Death!

“Chill as a down-east breeze should be.”
The Book-man said. “A ghostly touch
The legend has. I'm glad to see
Your flying Yankee beat the Dutch.”
“Well, here is something of the sort
Which one midsummer day I caught
In Narragansett Bay, for lack of fish.”
“We wait,” the Traveller said; “serve hot or cold your
dish.”



¹ This is based on a legend that was known in Harpswell
at the time. If anyone knows about the legend, the
Society would be interested. See page 7. Also, if you
would like a “clean” copy of this poem, please send
\$5.00 to David Hackett with your name and address.

drain field, plumbing, and necessary electrical work. Structural work to the old schoolhouse was started.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to Fred Perry and Daughters, R & C Excavating (Ron Dehahn), and D. W. Newberg Associates, Inc. for their in-kind donations and to Elizabeth Childs of Harpswell and Florida for a very generous donation for the bathroom.

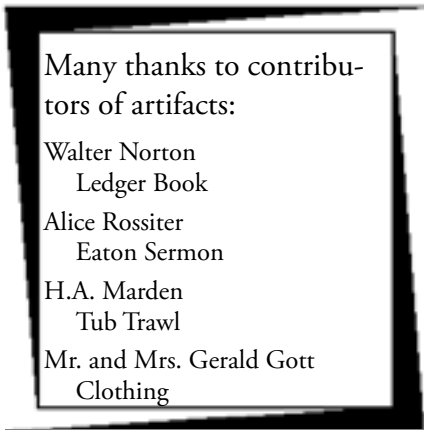
Up to the present the total cost for Centennial Hall including renovations, moving, etc., but not the cost of landscaping, is \$79,244.20. We have also benefited from in-kind donations exceeding \$15,000.

Upcoming projects include a solution to the iron in the water, restoring the inside ceiling, finishing the small room off the new bathroom, and possibly a creative approach to insulation and heating.

If you have any questions, ideas, etc. please contact Peg Newberg, 833-6336.

The Great Address Shift

Please update your Harpswell address now, while you are thinking of it, by including it with your dues payment. Alternatively, you can call Burr Taylor at 725-2802.



Calendar for 1999-2000

- Nov. 17th Board Meeting—7:00 pm
Old Town Meetinghouse
- Dec 15th Board Meeting—7:00 pm
Old Town Meetinghouse
- Feb. 23th Public Meeting—7:30 pm
Cundy’s Harbor
Community Hall*
- Apr. 26th Board Meeting—7:00 pm
Old Town Meetinghouse
- May 24th Public Meeting —
Orr’s Island School
House*
- Memorial Day 10-1 2:30 a.m.
Centennial Hall
- Jul. 26th Board Meeting—7:00 pm
Centennial Hall
- Aug. 16th Annual Meeting—
Centennial Hall*

*Topic and speaker to be announced.
All members are welcome to both the board meetings and the public meetings. If you wish to attend a board meeting, or have a comment, please contact David Hackett (833-6322), Box 121, Harpswell, 04079.

Officers and Directors 1999-2000

- Chuck Alexander
- Ralph Black, Jr.
- David Hackett, III (President)
- Peg Newberg
- John Paige
- Russell Robinson
- Virginia Stuart
- John Sylvester
- Burr Taylor
- Gerald York (Secretary/Treasurer)

A Website for the Historically Curious

The Harpswell Historical Society is thinking about creating a website that will provide diverse information about Harpswell, its villages, its islands, and particularly its history and traditions. A website is an effective media, because it can continue to grow indefinitely as people make additional contributions and more information is located. We would like to involve as many people as possible. Below are some ideas we have had that could be included. Please read over the list and consider if there are some contributions you could – and would – make.

- A timeline of events in the history of Harpswell and each of the villages. It could include links to descriptions of these events.
- A history of Harpswell and each of the villages.
- Pictures, including postcards, of Harpswell.
- Pictures of artifacts in the HHS collection.
- The text of documents in the HHS collections.
- Biographies of people of Harpswell.
- Reminiscences of people of Harpswell.
- Legends and literature about or links to Harpswell.
- Information about and history of Harpswell's islands.
- Contributions of various people of Harpswell to

the region, Maine, New England, and/or the United States (Economics, traditions, wars, business, religion, the arts, inventions, vacations, politics, government and more).

- Special Places.
We expect this project to be ongoing, perhaps for years. Also, we not only hope to have but need many people to contribute to this effort. We will need, at the least -
- People to contribute information and stories.
- People to find people to contribute the above.
- People to transcribe information.
- People to research information.
- People to help design the website.
- People with ideas.

If you and some others are interested, we would like to meet at the Harpswell Islands School on Jan. 19.

Please let us know what you think of this project. You can contact Gerry York at 1334 Harpswell Islands Rd., Orr's Island, ME; 04006; 933-5873 gyork@clinic.net or

Burr Taylor at 45 Taylor Rd., Harpswell, ME 04079 (Cundy's Harbor); btaylor@bowdoin.edu; 725-2802 .



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