

# Harpswell Historical Society



## Newsletter

Spring 2003

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

### President's Message

When I sit down to write the President's report for our newsletter usually there are just a few items of interest and the challenge is to stretch that into a long enough report. This is not like that! Today there are so many things to report that I worry that I will miss some.

First I am very pleased to say that our Archives is up and running and working wonderfully. The temperature is at 64 degrees and the humidity is at 50%. We have steel shelving and flat files installed.

Our growing collection of Harpswell's history and part of the Town's records now are housed where future generations of Harpswell people will find and learn from them.

Our Museum moves closer to be open on a regular basis. This summer should see this happen. Volunteers to help this happen are gladly accepted! The comments by those who have visited are very positive.

At Centennial Hall the ceiling is finally back up. We have a new microwave and a small refrigerator for

the small kitchen. Every year there are more reasons to visit Centennial Hall.

Our Society had it's annual meeting at the Old Meeting House Came and spoke about early Grave Stone carvers. We had part of the meeting inside and part in the graveyard. We will try to have this sort of meeting again. A good time was had by all!

The Fishermen's statue at Land's End remains an ever stoic reminder of the life of the Maine fisherman. We will look into a cleaning in the near future.

Respectfully submitted  
David Hackett III

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## Harpswell Genealogy

The Harpswell Genealogy Group has been meeting on a fairly regular basis during the past six months at the Orr's Island Library on the second Sunday of the month at 4PM.

Attendance was a bit thin at first but August and September were well attended with six and nine people in attendance respectively. The beginnings of a reference library have been started, with many of the Charles Nelson Sinnett genealogies now and several Harpswell Directories available for research and a good start on a set of Harpswell Town Reports. Several local and out of state genealogists have placed copies of their family research in our library but we are still seeking copies of Brunswick High School and Mt. Ararat yearbooks, family bibles which contain vital records of births and deaths and other family history related items.

It is expected that the reference library and index will be relocated to the Harpswell Historical Society's new Archival research room at the new museum sometime around Memorial Day. Come in and discover your family history. We expect to be open on a regular basis (to be determined) as well as on the second Sunday of the month throughout the summer and fall of 2003.

## Centennial Hall

Several well attended activities took place at Centennial Hall during 2002. In addition to the Garden Club Art Show and Flower Show, there were meetings of the Historical Society, an evening of bluegrass music with Jim Chard and the Windy River Band, and Matt Newberg, singer/songwriter. Harpswell Island students visited the Hall as well as the museum and other surrounding buildings as part of their Maine Studies Program. A celebration to honor Dr. Currier McEwen's 100th birthday was a successful event as was the second annual Lighting of the Tree with a community sing-a-long and gathering over refreshments. The building is always opened to the public on

## Memorial Day .

The ceiling has been restored and work continues on the small kitchen. The emphasis this summer will be to raise money to finish the kitchen and to move the school house to a foundation to the right of its present location.

## Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was very successful. Featuring Ralph Tucker, founder and past president of the Association of Gravestone Studies. Mr. Tucker spoke and demonstrated the evolution of symbols and the work of local Carvers. The meeting took place both outdoors in the Old Town Meetinghouse cemetery and indoors at the Meetinghouse. A reception followed at



### Many thanks to contributors of artifacts and services:

- ◆ Paul Bird
- ◆ Pat Mooney & class
- ◆ Harpswell Selectmen
- ◆ Kellogg Church
- ◆ Joyce Thomas
- ◆ Joan & Emile Chonko

## Calendar for 2002-2003

- June 18<sup>th</sup> 7:00: Library Hall, Bailey Island. Share stories of historic Bailey Island; Nancy Jensen will be there to sign her book; Selected Museum photographs and artifacts will be on view. Refreshments
- May 27<sup>th</sup> Memorial Day: Museum and Centennial Hall will be open
- July 4<sup>th</sup> Independence Day: Museum and Centennial Hall will be open
- Aug. 20<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting— Centennial Hall, topic and speaker to be announced.

\*to confirm meeting or speaker call David Hackett (833-6322) or Peg Newberg (833-6336)

All members are welcome to attend 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 2002-2003

David Hackett, III (President)  
Peg Newberg  
Burr Taylor  
Gerald York (Secretary/Treasurer)

## Harpswell Center

A sad accident occurred here Saturday afternoon in which Thomas M. Stover lost his life. That morning he went to Ragged Island to assist Isaac L. Dunning get his sheep and was accompanied by Gilbert Dunning and Elwood Allen. They were in two dories and a float. On returning that afternoon they were near Stover's Point when Gilbert rowed along side and inquired how Mr. Stover was getting along. He replied that he was all right and that he would take his time the rest of the way. It was snowing and darkness was coming on, but he was only about two miles from home and no danger was anticipated. The men soon arrived at Geo. A. Merriman's.

When Mr. Stover did not come his friends became anxious and went to hunt him up but were doomed to disappointment. Sunday the search was resumed and his body was found washed ashore on Johnson's Point at Orr's Island. His boat was south of the body with a large hole smashed in her side. No trace of the sheep was found. Dr. Mansur was called and pronounced death due to drowning.

Theories differ. Many think that the boat was struck by the ice and, fearing, that she would go down, he got on the ice cake in hopes he would be picked up, and there he was frozen to death. Others think he got lost in the thick snow and

rowed out into the bay and when his boat capsized he clung to her until he nearly reached the shore and was overcome by the cold and was drowned. The funeral services were held from the Congregational church Tuesday at 11 a. m., Rev. R. B. Dills officiated. The subject selected for his impressive remarks was "What is Your Life, It appeareth for a little while and then passeth away." The church choir composed of Mrs. M. J. Curtis, Mrs. Augustus Merriman, George B. Littlefield, W. S. Allen, John A. Curtis, and Freeland Smith with Mrs. Elwood D. Allen organist, rendered three selections in a creditable manner. A cluster of thirty-six white chrysanthemums and ferns, a gift from Geo. A. Merriman's family, rested on the casket.

The deceased had been assistant keeper on board the lightship Cape Elizabeth, 74, since she has been at her station, and was at home for a two weeks vacation. He was highly respected by his ship-mates, who will sadly miss him. He is survived by two sisters, Miss Elizabeth Stover of Brunswick, and Mrs. Lydia S Merriman of the Center, and one brother Penned A. of Portland, besides many relatives and friends.

## Museum Update

Dreams have become reality for the Harpswell Historical Society. After an enthusiastic start during the winter of 2001 to our fund raising campaign for renovations to

the Harpswell Museum and Archives, activity slowed considerably over the summer of 2002 when we were unable to find a contractor to begin construction. As fall approached, the Directors worried that there would be no progress on the building before spring, upsetting the timetable for a Memorial Day 2002 opening. However, prayers were answered in November when Sam Alexander and Paul Allen of Alexander and Allen Inc. were able to work on removing the dormer from the front of the second floor and closing it the exterior of the building. As part of that work the old cooler section of the store was removed and the old foundation rocks were hauled off. New footings and sills were found to be required on the back and north sides of the building along with new clapboards on the east side. Footings were also poured for the new archives vault and research room where the old soda coolers had been and the vault area was enclosed in an attractive cape style addition. Within the building the old deli area was removed to restore the floor level to original and has created a large open display area for larger artifacts. It is expected this exhibit space will contain boats, wagons, farm implements, a reproduction of a fish house, fishing gear, blacksmith tools, and a working hay scale which was used to weigh hay wagons and which was found under the floor of the old deli area. The rest of the build-

ing contains a gallery area where paintings, photographs and other art work pertaining to Harpswell and Harpswell artists can be exhibited, a handicapped accessible bathroom and the main exhibit room. Most all the first floor areas was complete before Memorial Day 2002.

The renovations to the second floor have had to wait for further fund raising efforts but Lee Allen of Harpswell has begun the renovations to those spaces which will be turned into a small office space, darkroom, storage area and a large workroom where exhibits will be designed and put together. The exterior of the building is expected to be painted by mid summer.

The directors of the historical society invite you to stop by and view the progress. This building is where your history will be stored and displayed for years to come

## Adopt a Harpswell Cemetery

The Harpswell Historical Society has the responsibility for upkeep of two Harpswell Cemeteries. The Wilson Cemetery near the Ewing Narrows Bridge and the Meriam Stover Thomas Cemetery near Stovers Cove. We are looking for volunteers to make a spring and fall trip to these sites and check on their condition to determine if tree limbs needed to be removed, grass cut and leaves raked, etc. If maintenance is found to be required the volunteer would contact a board member who would see the problem taken care of. A very minimal amount of time would be required by these volunteers and they would not need to be a year round resident. Interested persons can contact

Web site: [www.curtislibrary.com/hhs](http://www.curtislibrary.com/hhs)

Remember the Society's web site! There you can find the latest update in the schedule of Society events, the newest projects, updates for ongoing projects, miscellaneous Harpswell history, old photographs and postcards, read the latest Society newsletter, discover links to other history related pages and find contact information for Society officers. Bookmark the Harpswell Historical Society Web-Pages for your history needs.

## Harpswell Cemeteries

Do you have an old family cemetery on your Harpswell property or know of one on a neighbor's property? The Historical Society is interested in cataloging and recording the location of any of the many small family plots which once served the small farms and homesteads. These old burial grounds of sometimes only one or two plots are slowly being forgotten and lost to development and undergrowth. Stones are eroding and valuable family information is lost to future generations. The first step in reversing this trend is to record the inscriptions on the stones and the location of the plot. If you have information that can assist in this project, please contact Gerry York 833-5873 or email [gyork@clinic.net](mailto:gyork@clinic.net).



### Harpswell Historical Society Membership

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$10.00 Individual  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15.00 Family   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25.00 Contributor | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50.00 Patron   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200.00 Life       | <input type="checkbox"/> _____.____ Other |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Winter address, if different \_\_\_\_\_

Your Contribution is tax deductible

Please make your check payable to Harpswell Historical Society and mail it to c/o Gerald York, Treasurer; Harpswell Historical Society; 1334 Harpswell Islands Road; Orr's Island, ME 04066

Harpswell Historical Society

c/o Gerry York

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