OLD BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Biannual Newsletter of the Society – Spring 2022

A Message From Our President

OBHS Spring News Letter 2022 - Message from the President

In the Fall of 1987, the man who taught me to build wooden boats sadly died. His name was Edvard Salor, and he immigrated to the US from Norway when he was 27. He and his wife Edith had no children, and when they died the executor of their estate settled their affairs. For some reason he decided to have all their personal possessions - pictures, letters, documents, even tools - thrown in a dumpster. No one, including his sister in Norway, his friends in Sweden, or students at the Carpenter's Boat Shop where Edvard had taught for eight years would be able to see or appreciate his pictures, boat models, boat designs, and remarkable mementos which were testimonies to his hard work and his life well lived.

That sad memory is part of the reason I so deeply treasure the Old Bristol Historical Society. It offers a place where the tragic end of Edvard's legacy might not be repeated. It is a place where history can be collected, heritage preserved, and the memory of our past shared for generations to come.

This concept became an even more vivid reality for me over the last few years. In the Winter of 2020, fellow OBHS Board members Russ Lane and Chuck Rand and I travelled to Madbury, NH to do a video interview with Lorraine Morong from Louds Island. Lorraine was the unofficial, 95-year-old historian of Louds/Muscongus Island, having summered there ever since the early 1960's. The stories and remembrances she shared were humorous, poignant, and fascinating. It was a day that Russ, Chuck, and I will not forget.

Then six months later Lorraine died. But because of that special recording, many people on the island and many of Lorraine's family members have reached out to share how grateful they were to have her memory so beautifully preserved through that poignant video interview.

Ed Gifford's Fish House

Likewise last winter, the same film crew of Russ, Chuck and I videotaped Reg and Bette Reilly. It was a delightful time interviewing them and hearing their stories of yore. Then in the Fall of last year, Reg died. I was honored to share in his memorial service at the New Harbor Cemetery. Once again, many people commented how grateful they were for Reg, but also for the interview which was able to capture a sense of his wonderful life in his beloved village of New Harbor.

And last Fall, (as I shared in our Fall OBHS Newsletter) Eric Lax and Karen Sultzberger took lobster fishermen Brian Sawyer and Steve Hope and me in their boat around New Harbor and Back Cove so that I could photograph the fish houses while Brian and Steve shared the fish house histories. It was a wonderful time. Then this spring an exceptionally high tide and strong gale from the east completely destroyed Ed Gifford's fish house and washed

it out to sea, never to be seen again. Fortunately, we now have within the annals of OBHS the photographs and description of that fish house heritage for all to see and remember.

So, I share these simple stories to remind us all of how important OBHS is to our community and to the preservation of our remarkable heritage and history.

Over the winter, OBHS members and volunteers have been continuing this important work. Many others have also been working steadily to create our new Bristol History Center, rebuild our historic mill, and create a simple park by the Pemaquid River for all to come and enjoy. We so hope that you will visit us this summer when we finally open our doors in early July. Please come and see all that we have been doing with your support, and perhaps even lend a helping hand. Consider also making a contribution so that our important historical center can continue to grow and become a place that will make us all proud.

Blessings,

Bob Ives - President

Officers and Directors of the Old Bristol Historical Society, July 2021 - July 2022

President: Robert Ives
Vice President: Jody Bachelder
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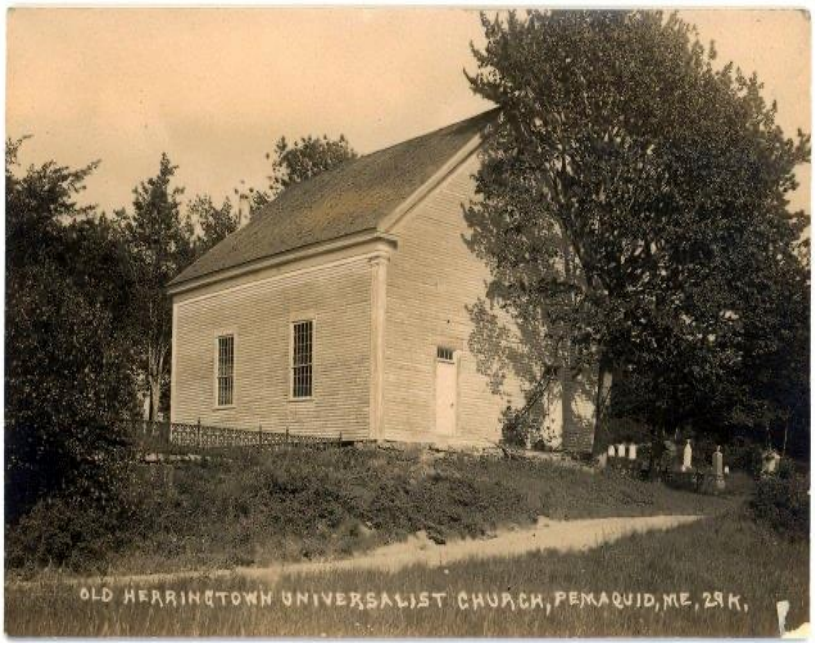
The Harrington Meeting House

This Spring for my column entitled "***Where Have All the Houses Gone?"*** I thought that on the Sestercentennial or Semiquincentennial (250th anniversary) of the Harrington Meetin g house that I would share the interesting journey of that historic structure.

The Town of Bristol was incorporated on June 21,1765. The Massachusetts legislature required that every town provide for the "preaching of the gospel." With Bristol being so large geographically, the question arose at every town meeting from 1765 to 1772, where to build the meetinghouse and how many meetinghouses should be built. With the challenges of transportation then, everyone wanted it to be near home. In 1768, William Sproul donated land for a meetinghouse in Harrington. Soon thereafter, land was also donated in the Walpole and Broad Cove. In 1770, it was recommended that not one, but three meetinghouses be built for Bristol. At the next town meeting in 1771, however the people of Bristol refused to raise any money for the buildings. Finally, each section of Bristol in Harrington, Walpole and Broad Cove decided to raise their own funds to construct their own meetinghouses.



Before the Harrington Meetinghouse could be constructed however, the people at Bristol Mills put up a post and beam framework for a meetinghouse near the present-day Seaside Grange Hall. In 1773, at the Town Meeting a committee was appointed to remove the frame in Bristol Mills and place it in Harrington on the land donated by William Sproul. Although considerable conflict arose, the frame was eventually moved down the "Hay Meadow Road" along the east side of the Little Falls Brook where it was eventually placed on a foundation in the back portion

of what is now the old Harrington cemetery. There it was finished off as the Harrington Meetinghouse where it remained for nearly 80 years.

Around 1850 however, the meetinghouse was relocated once again to its present location on the front part of the old cemetery to be closer to the newly altered Harrington Road. It was jacked up and physically moved over the top of the present cemetery without disturbing any of the stones.

Interestingly, not only did the Harrington Meeting house move a number of times geographically, but it also moved three times theologically. When construction was completed in 1773, its first minister, the Rev. Alexander McLean was Presbyterian, and the congregation became Presbyterian with the Meetinghouse coming under the jurisdiction of the Boston Presbytery. In 1796, Rev. McLean was replaced by the Rev. William Riddel, a Congregationalist. Thus, the Meetinghouse became Congregational, under the jurisdiction of the Congregational Conference in Portland. Eventually in the1840's, the Meetinghouse selected a Universalist minister, and in 1853, dedicated itself to that religious tradition. The Meetinghouse remained a place of worship for another 65 years until the congregation dwindled, and the Meetinghouse fell into disrepair.

In 1960, after not being used for over 40 years, Ilonka Fertig, a generous and devoted historian living on the Harrington Road took it upon herself to raise funds and rebuild this historic building for the town of Bristol. She had it renovated to its original, simple grandeur, and it was rededicated on the anniversary of the town of Bristol's Bicentennial in 1965.

Many thanks to Ilonka Fertig, Dr. Byron Stuhman, C. Weston Dash, Ed Lewis and Pete Hope for their writings on the Harrington Meetinghouse.

Pemaquid Falls Park Report
July 12, 2022 . . . . The first anniversary of the OBHS Board's approval of the Pemaquid Falls Park Site

Much has happened since July 12, 2021 - leading to an exciting milestone that will be reached in June: the completion of the first of many improvements to the parcel of land OBHS acquired in May, 2020. Until now the land along the bank of the Pemaquid River has been barren, unsightly and a source of erosion impacting the river waters.

I'd like to show you what will soon be a reality. Can I ask you to take an imaginary walk with me? Let's meet at the History Center front door.

Please walk with me toward the bridge that spans the Pemaquid River. Yes, we're passing the Pollinator Island on your left. And as you look straight ahead, you see the bridge. But let's pause here for a moment.

The "island" on your left was given its name because the plantings are specifically selected to attract nature's pollinators: bees, butterflies, and birds. A berm at the rear of the island will keep road debris and traffic-polluted water on the road, not on the park property. The berm and the island itself with its graded surface will direct rainwater to a collection point where it will move to a central collection point.

A few more steps and we're in front of the left "side" of the riparian area. Oh . . . what's a riparian area? I've got to tell you - I never even heard the word until I found myself surrounded with a crew of expert home gardeners. Riparian refers to land that's situated on the banks of a river. It's also used to describe the land immediately adjacent to a river or stream. If we walk toward the mill and turn to our left - facing the river - we'll see the right "side" of the riparian area.

The length of this area will be built with a berm so that water and the ground it takes with it won't run into the river. The runoff will be collected and directed through an underground conduit to a rain garden and sediment pond (but we'll save those for another walk on another day). Trees that are reminiscent of the era when the mill was busy being a mill will dot the riparian area along with

attractive shrubbery and ground cover plants with root systems that will hold the ground while restraining children from coming too close to the river's edge. Thanks for joining me on our "walk".

Do come and visit us this summer - and help celebrate our first anniversary. In addition to the Park's progress, there's steadfast progress being made on the mill building and noticeable improvements in the History Center. And we think you'll agree that the real riparian area is as attractive as it is a true "show and tell" of what lies ahead. With the help of donors, we hope that before the weather requires us to stop, we'll complete the ponds, paths, observation areas, and parking area that the approved site plan promises.

"A Man Astride Two Worlds": The Odd Adventures and Strange Deliverances of John Gyles, Interpreter and Culture Broker, 1698– 1749

by Neill De Paoli, PhD

On December 23, 1726, the General Council of Massachusetts awarded Captain John Gyles a pay increase as an interpreter in recognition of his "good services for many years and his present usefulness by his great knowledge of Indian affairs and customs." The Council had recognized Captain Gyles for his nearly three decades of service as an interpreter for the government of Massachusetts. He continued to do so until 1749. In that time, the former Indian captive rapidly established himself as one of the province's leading interpreters and a critical player in peace and trade negotiations between the English and the Wabanaki of Maine. John Gyles was a "culture broker," an individual who regularly moved between two or more cultures. With the spread of European settlement throughout North America, the colonial governments of British North America, New France, New Netherlands, and New Spain, colonial officials used the culture broker's knowledge of indigenous cultures and languages, as interpreters and negotiators, to mediate inter-cultural disagreements involving political, economic, and social relations while, at the same time, furthering the military and political ambitions of the colonies and ultimately their English and European crowns. John Gyles was part of a small group of English interpreters based in Maine during the late 17th and first half of the 18th-centuries. Studying John Gyles's career not only provides a window into his emergence as a leading New England interpreter but the growing challenges Gyles and his contemporaries faced during the 18th century. John Gyles's story reveals someone whose impartiality as a cultural mediator was challenged by his cultural and religious beliefs, outside political and social pressures, and military responsibilities. Exploring the experiences of individuals such as John Gyles also helps understand why relations between the English and Native Americans of colonial New England ultimately failed.

John Gyles's story begins far from New England's northeastern frontier. He was born in 1678 on Long Island, New York, the son of Thomas and Margaret Gyles. The Gyles's had resettled there after returning from England where Thomas settled his father's estate. John's father had abandoned his original plans to return to their pre-war home on the lower reaches of the Kennebec River after fleeing it when the first Anglo-Wabanaki war broke out in 1676. Instead, the Gyles's settled in Pemaquid where they remained from c. 1682 until the summer of 1689. Thomas Gyles was one of Pemaquid's elite, owning a spacious home in the settlement's main village, several fishing stages and boats, and a large farm at Pemaquid Falls. Thomas Gyles was also the chief justice of Cornwall County and politically and socially well connected to the province of New York and the Dominion of New England, the region's administrators during these years.

During the Gyles family's tenure on Maine's mid-coast, Pemaquid returned to its pre-war status as the commercial and political hub as one of northern New England's leading fishing and fur trading centers. Governor Edmund Andros of New York put the English settlement in the political spotlight with the construction of Fort Charles in the summer of 1677. For the next twelve years, the English settlement of Pemaquid was New England's northeastern bulwark from French and Indian attacks. Fort Charles and several nearby truckhouses were also popular locales' for Wabanaki and French traders and diplomats doing business, negotiating political and trade agreements, and socializing with local traders, merchants, military personnel, and

New York and Massachusetts authorities. As a young boy, John Gyles had full view of this hustle and bustle from his home no more than a stone's throw away.

For John Gyles the rhythm of daily life on Maine's northeastern frontier came to an abrupt halt in August, 1689. What began as a work day for John, his father, two brothers and several hired hands in the fields of the Gyles farm at Pemaquid Falls rapidly deteriorated into a nightmarish afternoon of chaos, bloodshed, and death. A party of "thirty or forty Indians" attacked the Gyles' work party as they labored in the field. In the ensuing melee, the young Gyles saw his father killed along with several others. Much the same took place three miles downriver where a second force of Wabanaki attacked and destroyed Pemaquid's main village and Fort Charles. Roughly 50 villagers and troops died in this attack. The Wabanaki carried about two dozen Pemaquidians, including John, his mother, and three siblings, into captivity. The Indigenous war party canoed their English captives to the lower reaches of the Penobscot River and the fortified Penobscot village of Pentagoet. John would never see his mother again once the Wabanaki and their captives left Pentagoet.

From there, John Gyles spent the next six years among several Malecite Wabanaki bands traveling by foot, canoe, and "raft" with his Indian captors throughout the woods of eastern Maine and New Brunswick. During that time, he was thoroughly immersed in Wabanaki lifeways. The English captive became adept at Indigenous methods of hunting, fishing, and planting, and food storage. His diet varied dramatically, ranging from the scarcity of the winter months to the bounty of spring, summer, and early fall. Food included moose, bear, fish, turtle, porcupine, corn, wild grapes, and "roots." Similarly treatment varied, some masters were harsh and abusive and others were kind and protective. One of Gyles's relationships with his Malecite captors developed into a long-term friendship. John Gyles spent the final three years of his captivity as a "servant" of Louis Damours, a prominent French trader and his wife on the lower reaches of the St. John's River in today's New Brunswick. Despite John Gyles initial response to living with a family of the detested French, the young captive quickly adapted to his new setting. Gyles became Damours's able and trusted assistant in the Indian trade, taking advantage of his ability to speak Maliseet dialects. He also slowly learned to speak French. Within a short time, Damours entrusted Gyles with the keys of the truckhouse and its operation so that his "whole employment was trading and hunting." Their relationship was such that the Frenchman left the young English man in charge of his business for over half of a year while he tended to other affairs in France. Soon after Dumours' return, he released John Gyles and placed him on board an English sloop that sailed from Port Royal to Boston.

On June 28th, 1698, the nineteen year old Gyles stepped off the sloop on to Boston's waterfront, a free man. Within weeks of Gyles's release from captivity, the province of Massachusetts hired him as an interpreter and cultural mediator. However, John Gyles "apprenticeship" was challenging. Province officials hired him as the need arose, which meant frequent layoffs and modest pay. Furthermore, Gyles's erratic work schedule and pay issues made it difficult for him to pay for schooling, something he needed thanks to his long captivity. Over the next three years, Gyles sailed out of Boston to Maine, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia on a number of trading, prisoner exchange, and peace treaty negotiating expeditions with the Wabanaki. He also furthered his backwoods "education" as he traveled by foot deep into the wooded interior of Maine in all manner of weather.

In July 1700, John Gyles began his first military posting at Casco Fort on the mouth of the Presumpscot River. During Gyles's four years at the fort, he was kept busy as an interpreter, truckmaster, and officer. In 1701 and 1703, Lieutenant Gyles participated in his second and third major Anglo-Wabanaki trade and peace negotiations held between Massachusetts representatives and Maine Wabanaki delegates on the shores of Casco Bay. At that locale, Gyles was one of several English and Indigenous interpreters. Negotiations succeeded in addressing Wabanaki concerns about unregulated private traders, the prices of trade goods, and the availability of licensed gunsmiths to repair their firearms at no cost. Larger issues such as Massachusetts's acknowledgement of the Maine Wabanaki as equal political and economic partners remained unresolved and continued as a serious point of tension and conflict between the two parties well into the 18th century.

Lieutenant Gyles's breakthrough took place in a series of Anglo-Wabanaki peace negotiations that took place in Portsmouth, New Hampshire and southern Maine in 1713 and 1714. One of these Preliminary negotiations More – John Gyles meeting with Wabanaki diplomats at Pemaquid –2/1714. Massachusetts authorities selected Gyles along with Lieutenants Joseph Bean of York and Samuel Jordan of Saco as the lead interpreters for these complex and at times heated negotiations that culminated in the Treaty of Portsmouth signed by both sides in the summer of 1714.

What came out of the negotiations? Over the next thirty-five years, the onetime Wabanaki captive, interpreted at virtually every major Anglo-Wabanaki conference held in Boston and various locales in Maine such as Arrowsic, Georgetown, and Falmouth. He also hosted countless lower level Anglo-Wabanaki conferences at Forts George and St. George. In 1715, the province of Massachusetts selected him to oversee the construction and command of Fort George in Brunswick. He remained at this post for ten years. In 1726, Captain Gyles took on his final command at the fortified trading post of Fort St. George on the upper reaches of the St. Georges River, a position he held for ten years. With these postings, Captain Gyles "wore two hats" that often ran at cross purposes and complicated his job. First, he was responsible for maintaining open dialogue and amicable relations with the Wabanaki. What his Wabanaki "clients" desired did not always mesh with the aims of the province of Massachusetts. Expand and more detail – loss of land & access to natural resources, The government of Massachusetts and the English public expected Gyles to defend English territory and its inhabitants from Wabanaki or French attacks. Not surprisingly, John Gyles ran afoul of powerful land speculators such as Samuel Waldo who promoted further expansion into indigenous territory in Maine despite Massachusetts Governor Jonathan Belcher's efforts to establish a more amicable relationship with the Wabanaki and control Waldo's plans . Waldo's actions did little to ease mounting Anglo-Wabanaki tensions.

By the late 1730s, Captain Gyles's career began to wind down. In 1737, John Gyles relinquished command of Fort St. Georges and relocated to Roxbury, Massachusetts to live with his elderly second wife. Gyles, despite his advancing years and ill health, remained "on call" as one of Massachusetts elite interpreters. He spent considerable time meeting with paid Wabanaki informants at Fort St. Georges. They kept him apprised of the activities of the Wabanaki and French. On other occasions, Gyles provided food, clothing, and medical care to indigent Indian visitors. His efforts to help Wabanaki men, women, and children were likely driven by a combination of concern for their well being and practical considerations of maintaining good relations and gathering intelligence. Many of these individuals were important Wabanaki leaders or their relatives, men such as the Kennebec sachem Bomaseen and the highly respected Penobscot leader and orator Loron (Saguarraub). Gyles and Loron had a particularly long and complicated relationship. Loron accused the English of misinterpreting the purpose of the 1725 negotiations/treaty. On several other occasions, Loron spoke of Gyles's in positive terms. In 1740, Norridgewock leader Loron, while attending an AngloWabanaki conference in Boston noted that "We have been acquainted with Capt. Gyles this forty year, we perceive that now he is grown old & infirm is desirous of leaving our Parts, but we desire that Capt. Gyles may continue with us & that he may live and die with us for we are not pleased with Strangers, and Capt Gyles is a lover of peace and well acquainted with our Customs & Language."

John Gyles also found time to write a book (probably with the help of a ghost writer) entitled The Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, etc. In the Captivity of John Gyles, Esq;. The book was released in 1736 with considerable promotion in the Boston Evening Post. Gyles's book focused on his nearly nine year captivity. The author also included a four page appendix that highlighted his career as an interpreter and military officer. The timing of the book's release, the contents of the appendix, and the identification of the author as "Commander of the Garrison on St. Georges River" strongly suggests that Captain Gyles was using The Odd Adventures to cement his legacy as an important player in early Maine's Anglo-Wabanaki relations.

John Gyles long career as an interpreter and culture broker ended in 1749 at the age of seventytwo. His final hurrah took place at the Treaty of Falmouth in today's Portland. Gyles shared interpreting responsibilities with his longtime colleague Captain Joseph Bean. The winding down of Captain Gyles's career also signaled the changing of the guard of English interpreters/culture brokers. By 1755, Captains John Gyles, Joseph Bean, and Samuel Jordan had passed from the scene.

With their departures, Massachusetts lost its most experienced and skilled interpreters and negotiators, men who had begun their careers between 1698 and c. 1710. Newcomers, such as Jabez Bradbury, had the opportunity to work with the three veteran interpreters and emerged as capable replacements. Unfortunately, Bradbury was a rarity. In addition, the political and military power of Maine's Wabanaki had diminished noticeably by the 1730s and 1740s. Furthermore, Governor Jonathan Belcher's brought an end to a decade (1730-41) of a politician who pursued conciliatory policies Jonathan Belcher – conciliatory policies (1730-1741) Not surprisingly, Massachusetts officials put less effort into maintaining the negotiating template they

had developed with their Wabanaki counterparts over the preceding half century. What followed just accelerated growing tensions between the English and Wabanaki of Maine. Most notable were two instances of English settlers murdering three Wabanaki without provocation in 1749 and 1755 in Wiscasset and Matinicus Island, respectively. In both cases, little was done to bring the guilty parties to justice. Sadly, these changes and incidents only grew more severe in the decades that followed.

Mill Progress Report

Ed Blaiklock and his crew are working daily to rebuild the back wall of the mill building. In June 2021, they discovered much more rot in the building structure than we knew about. This was despite assurances from the structural engineers that the building was basically sound. Work was halted in June, as was planned anyway, to reassess the situation.

Ed returned in March 2022 to start removing the back wall so the frame could be rebuilt. He has made great progress with that back wall now being completely removed. Replacement pieces have been fashioned out of both old and new timbers to recreate the original structure. The mortice and tenon joints have been carved by hand. They truly are a work of art.

They will start to put the puzzle back together again in hopes of having it done by the end of June. At that point, the wall can be reshingled, windows reinstalled, and work can begin on putting on the cedar shake roof.

This spring, we hosted Maine's largest elver dealer with a buying station at the mill. They had a very successful season and plan on returning next year. This is important work to support the local Native American groups who depend economically on this fishing. We are proud to be able to host and support these communities. Having the elver dealer on site makes selling the elvers easier and more profitable for the Native American groups. In addition, the lease payments from the elver dealer provide a reliable source of income to help cover OBHS operations costs and continue our mission.

Old Bristol Historical Society 2022 Summer Talk Series

- **Down Memory Lane - Old Bristol History** by **Belinda Osier and Chuck Rand**
  Bristol Mills Church Parish Hall - 7 p.m., July 3.

- **Maine's First Ship** by **Dr. James Parmentier**
  Pemaquid Point Lighthouse Park Learning Center - 7 p.m., July 17.

- **The Storm: Pemaquid Point Shipwrecks of 1903.** by **Wayne Reilly**
  Pemaquid Point Light House Park Learning Center - 7 p.m., July 31.

- **Witchcraft in Mid-coast Maine** by **Prof Emerson (Tad) Baker**
  Pemaquid Point Light House Park Learning Center - 7 p.m., August 14.

- **Life in Mid-coast Maine in 1820 by Carl R. (Chip) Griffin III Esq.**
  Bristol Congregational Church - 7 p.m., August 31.

All talks are free to OBHS members, and $5.00 for non-members

Old Bristol Historical Society, P.O. Box 87, Bristol, ME 04539

2022 Membership Form

Name: _____

Email: _____

Email:_____

Phone:_____(Cell) _____(Home)

Preferred Mailing Address:_____

_____

Alternate Mailing Address:_____

_____

Membership:

Single $15___ Household $20___ Friend $50___ Supporter $100____

Patron $250___ Benefactor $500___ Partner $750___ Preservationist $1,000

Please note that we no longer offer Life Memberships. However, all current Life Memberships will continue to be honored. We thank you for your Life Membership support through the years.

We always need help! Please check if you have skills/experience in any of the following areas and would like to help:

- ☐ Web design
- ☐ Graphic design
- ☐ Social Media (FB, IG, etc.)
- ☐ Writing articles for newspaper/newsletter/emails
- ☐ Library/archives
- ☐ Museum exhibits
- ☐ Photography
- ☐ Fundraising
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ Grant writing
- ☐ Carpentry
- ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Electrical

If you would like to say more about your skills/experience/interests, please us the reverse side of this form.

Thank you!

The Old Bristol Historical Society is a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. All donations to OBHS are tax deductible Tax ID #30-0222568

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