



OLD BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Biannual Newsletter of the Society – Spring 2024

A Message From Our President

Hello everyone. It's finally spring in Maine, and we who live here year-round are looking forward to the return of summer weather and of our neighbors, friends, and visitors who winter elsewhere. A lot has happened since our Fall 2023 newsletter came out.

I must start by acknowledging the two storms with devastatingly high tides that struck our community in January, seriously damaging or destroying fish houses, piers, homes, the bell house at the point, our beach, roads, and more. Many were historic properties and venues that were dear to us all. Our heartfelt sympathies and support go out to all those who were directly impacted by this tragedy. In this newsletter you will find an article on some of the storm damage by colleague Bobby Ives with photos and more information.

There have been a lot of positives too. An important one is that we have recently hired our first staff, all of whom are part-time.

Violet Artemis Fletcher signed on with us as our winter caretaker at the end of October. While our History Center is not open to the public between Indigenous People's Day and Memorial Day Weekend, our staff and volunteers continue to meet and work there. Violet has been keeping the space clean and accessible throughout the winter. Along the way she has taken on another role: editing and converting our speaker series to video. Thank you, Violet!

Thanks to some generous donors, Alison Brislin started with us as our Collections Manager in January. Taking over from our long-time outstanding Collections Manager Chuck Rand requires filling some big shoes, but Allison has jumped in with both feet!

Most recently, Michael Chaney started with us as our first Executive Director on March 1. This is a BIG DEAL for OBHS. Michael brings decades of relevant experience, and he will be invaluable in providing leadership and helping us to build capacity as we grow into the community resource that we aspire to be. Welcome aboard, Michael!

In the coming pages you will find introductory profiles of both Michael and Alison.

Much more is going on. The balance of this newsletter offers pieces on Bristol history; reports of progress with the mill, History Center, and grounds; volunteer profiles; profiles of Michael and Alison; descriptions of our upcoming exhibitions, programs, and events; opportunities for getting involved; mill equipment that we are seeking; and more. I hope that you enjoy them.

Our annual membership campaign is currently underway. If you have already joined or renewed your membership for 2024, thank you. Members and volunteers are our backbone. If you haven't yet joined, please consider it.

In closing, I would like to express my deepest thanks to all of you, our supporters: our hundreds of members and donors, our volunteers, our contractors, and grant agencies. None of what OBHS does would be possible without you. Thank you. Thank you.

Mark Ziarnik

Officers and Directors of the Old Bristol Historical Society, July 2023 - July 2024

President: Mark Ziarnik

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The Winter Storms of January 10 & 13, 2024 in New Harbor and Back Cove

by Rev. Robert E. Ives



Diane Williams' wharf and cottage



Sandy Davis' fish house and wharf

The mission of Old Bristol Historical Society is to collect, preserve and share the history of our beloved town of Bristol. We have been doing this ever since our founding in 2003. Sadly this winter on January 10 and 13, 2024, two enormous tides and treacherous storms destroyed many of the historical waterfront buildings of New Harbor and Back Cove. The combination of an 11-foot tide and 50 mph southeast winds demolished over a dozen wharfs and did extensive damage to numerous fish houses. Docks were lifted off their pilings and what was not pulled out to sea was left high and dry to be carted away by the hard working members of the New Harbor community working to clean up after the storm. Estimates are that over a million dollars will be needed to repair the damage.

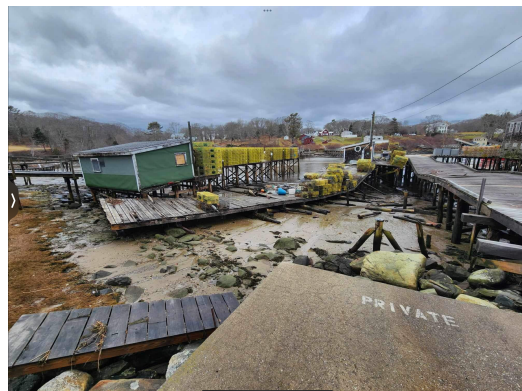
I am writing this article because even though much of the physical aspects of our maritime history was destroyed on those two winter days, their importance remains in the minds and hearts of those who have used them, and also in pictures collected back in the fall of 2021 on a simple journey around both New Harbor and Back Cove.

You see in October, 2021, I had the good fortune to go on a boat trip around both harbors. The purpose of the journey was to photograph all the wharfs and fish houses, and to learn about their history from two of our New Harbor fishermen, Brian Sawyer and Steve Hope. This fish house history tour had five members: Eric Lax as captain, Karen Sulzberger as mate, Brian and Steve as expert guides and tale tellers, and I, Robert Ives as scribe. While Eric and Karen handled the boat, I took notes and pictures, and Steve and Brian regaled us with the history of the 48 fish houses nestled into the waterfront and onto the hillsides of both harbors. It was a remarkable and delightful time.

For two years I did nothing with those pictures and notes except save them for Old Bristol Historical Society. With the onset of the two devastating storms, however, I thought that it would be appropriate to gather these pictures together, along with histories and commentary that Brian and Steve shared. I also used Pete Hope's book *Two Harbors and a Hill, The History of New Harbor* as a source. It is my hope to publish this volume so that our important maritime history will not be forgotten. It will be available through Old Bristol Historical Society so that any who are interested can see and read it.



Beth Gilbert Scammons' fish house and wharf



Brian Sawyer's wharf and fish house

Old Bristol Historical Society Welcomes Our First Executive Director

We are delighted to share with you that OBHS recently hired Michael Chaney for the role of Executive Director. He started with us in this part-time position on March 1. Michael brings decades of experience in executive positions with relevant historical and non-profit organizations throughout New England, most recently as the Executive Director of the Frances Perkins Center in Damariscotta. He is currently also the part-time Site Manager for the Frances Perkins Homestead in Newcastle.

From a personal perspective, for nearly 50 years Michael's life experience has been shaped by Alna, Bristol, and Muscongus Bay. He and his wife Laura moved back to his native Maine in 2010 to care for his father following the passing of his mother. Michael and Laura divide their time between their home in Alna and his family home on Louds Island, having family roots in both places. Michael's family first occupied the top of Golden Ridge in Alna back in 1872. Michael began going to Louds Island in the 1970s when his parents purchased a 1915 Poland/Loud house, and in 2004 Michael and Laura took over the care of the property when his father could no longer be there.

Welcome aboard Michael!

From the Executive Director

Since joining Old Bristol Historical Society on the first of March in the new role of part-time Executive Director, I have been made to feel welcome as I have gotten acquainted with many in the organization through committee meetings, planning sessions and volunteer Saturdays at the Mill at Pemaquid Falls. Alison Brislin, Collections Manager, arrived here a few short weeks before me, and we have settled into a Tuesday-Wednesday on-site presence at the History Center.

I am extraordinarily grateful to have begun work here at this time in the development of Old Bristol Historical Society. The accomplishments over the years in collecting, preserving and sharing the history of Bristol is well-known and highly regarded in our region of Maine. The collection is growing, it is accessible and extremely well cared for in the state of the art vault at the History Center. These efforts and the hiring of a Collections Manager demonstrates the commitment to our core mission. In addition to the exhibits in the History Center, we are opening the Mill at Pemaquid Falls on Memorial Day weekend. Entering this artifact of early mill technology, located on a powerful river, will be a memorable visitor experience.

As a native of Alna and a part-year resident of Louds Island for 30 years, I feel like I have come home. My original research as an historian began at the University of Maine's Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History. I found a mentor to guide me in writing about the history of woods work in Maine, focusing on the experience of the people who did the work, whether in the woods or at the mill.

As I have observed the assembly of this biannual newsletter, I am struck by the sheer amount of scholarship in these pages, in some cases written by friends I have known for a long time. It is good to be here and to join in making Bristol's rich history widely known.

Michael Chaney



Michael Chaney, OBHS's new Executive Director

Old Bristol Historical Society Welcomes Our New Collections Manager

This past January, the OBHS was pleased to welcome professional archivist Alison Brislin to her new position as OBHS Collections Manager. With a few months now under her belt familiarizing herself with the collection, cataloguing items, and uploading images and records to the online database, Alison is looking forward to OBHS' busy summer season and to the society receiving new donations and loans.

Alison, along with her husband and two-year-old son, recently moved to Thomaston, Maine from New Mexico. She brings with her a wealth of experience with both objects and archives.

Before entering the field of archival management, Alison earned a Masters of Fine and Decorative Arts from Sotheby's Institute of Art in London and went on to work at both Sotheby's and Christie's auction houses. She later moved to Los Angeles where she worked as a docent at the Eames Foundation and as a Creative Producer & Art Director for the Walt Disney Company creating content for marketing materials. Her work utilizing the vast archives at Disney sparked her interest in pursuing a second Master's degree in Information Studies.



Alison Brislin, OBHS's new
Collections Manager

In 2018, she entered the graduate program in Information Studies at the University of Texas at Austin with a specialization in Archives and Material Culture. In addition to her course work, Alison gained practical experience working as a research assistant to the Curator and Preservation & Access Archivist at the Alexander Architectural Archives. In 2019, she received a fellowship and spent the summer working as a Collections & Archives Fellow at Fallingwater in Pennsylvania.

After finishing her degree, Alison was hired as Assistant Archivist at the Alexander Architectural Archives where she stayed for two years. Her most recent job was as Lead Librarian at the El Rito Library in El Rito, New Mexico.

Originally from the east coast, Alison says that she and her husband Kyle were drawn to Maine for a number of reasons, but primarily by its natural beauty and outdoors lifestyle. In her spare time, Alison enjoys swimming, antiques, reading, and spending time with her family. She is especially looking forward to introducing her young son to the ocean this summer.

Volunteer Spotlight: Carol and Dick Joyal

If you visited the OBHS History Center last summer, you may have been warmly greeted by Carol and Dick Joyal. The Joyals have been long-time supporters of OBHS and when the call went out for volunteers to serve as hosts during the Center's open hours, they stepped forward. Carol grew up in Bristol, the daughter of Philip and Thelma (Sproul) Baker, and has deep roots in the town through both the Sproul and Baker family lines. Dick grew up in Laconia, New Hampshire, but came to love the town of Bristol through the couple's frequent trips back to Carol's hometown. In 2016, the couple retired and moved from Philadelphia back to Maine, residing in both Portland and Bristol, but in 2021 decided to move to Bristol full time. They currently live in the Sproul family homestead on Sproul Hill on a property that has been occupied by a Sproul descendant since the mid 1700s. Carol and Dick also serve as volunteers at the Washington School in Round Pond and at the Harrington Meetinghouse. OBHS is deeply grateful for the hours they've spent hosting at the History Center and for all that they do to help keep Bristol's history alive!



OBHS volunteers Dick and Carol Joyal

Collections News

by Belinda Osier

During this past winter, OBHS was pleased to receive a very large and historically significant loan of photographic images from society member Elaine Murdoch, a descendant of the Nichols family of Round Pond. The collection, which Elaine found stored in the attic of a family home, is notable in that it is mostly photographed by one individual, her great aunt Carrie “Cad” Nichols (1872-1951). Carrie, an aspiring and talented amateur photographer, was the daughter of James E. Nichols (1842-1914), a prominent Round Pond merchant and entrepreneur.

Carrie’s favorite subjects were people: family, friends, and especially extended family members, many of whom she photographed during their summer visits to Round Pond. While her work includes many portraits, some of the most interesting images show people socializing and taking part in various leisure activities. Many were taken out of doors, showing local landscapes in the background, while others were taken indoors revealing the turn-of-the-century interior of the Nichols’ home. Many of the images also reveal a strong sense of humor; you can clearly see how much fun the subjects were having.



Having a bit of fun, Carrie shot this image and titled it “Short lobsters.” July 1908



J.E. Nichols is shown here seeing his daughter Helen off at the steamship dock, bound for college. Carrie titled the shot “Tagged for Smith” perhaps referring to both the trunks and her sister. July 1910

During the fall, before retiring from his position as the society’s Collections Manager, Chuck Rand started communicating with Elaine about the broad scope of this collection. Both excited and intrigued, he volunteered to follow through with this one last project. So far, he has scanned 931 glass plate negatives, 20 loose card photographs and snapshots, and 736 cyanotypes and snapshots contained in eight albums. All are images dating from c. 1900-1910. There are still many years’ worth of negatives that have not been examined yet.

OBHS is truly grateful to Elaine for allowing us to scan and share these images with others, and also preserve them in our archives for future generations to see. If you have family photographs (whether just a few or many) or other historically significant objects or archival materials that you would like to share or donate, please contact the OBHS Collections Committee at our email address oldbristolhistoricalsociety03@gmail.com.

(Un)Laying the Foundation for Landscaping

On November 30 Hagar Enterprises removed the large concrete pad that was the foundation of the former lumberyard’s window shed. The operation was overseen from an archaeological perspective by Neill De Paoli, Ed Kitson, and Chuck Rand. Neill and Ed are planning to dig some test pits this spring in the surrounding northwest corner before we embark on subsequent restoration and landscaping of the campus.



Neill De Paoli and Chuck Rand monitor the removal of the concrete foundation.

Progress at the Mill

by Phil Averill

Progress continues on bringing the old mill at Pemaquid Falls back to life.

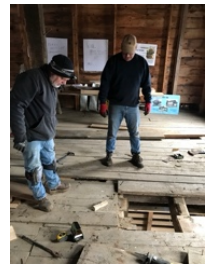
With all the refurbishing at the mill recently, it is hard to remember what it was like before we started. Fortunately we have an extensive photo record of the various stages of the work. Rotted posts have been replaced. The whole back side was removed and rebuilt as it originally was. Original windows were refurbished when possible; otherwise, vintage windows of the same type and size were used. With two exceptions, the exterior walls and all the roofs were reshingled with cedar shakes. The northern white addition dating from the mid-twentieth century has new asphalt roof shingles to match what it has always had.

Additions to the structure include a viewing platform underneath the mill to show off all the belts and pulleys that were used to run the various machines by water power. As a mill, the back wall was open to pass the timber products out of the building. This would not be great when the building becomes a museum; therefore the wall was filled in and includes a pair of large windows, thanks to Harold Dawson, to get a great view of the falls out back. A really dramatic sight.

All this work is leading to our goal of a mill museum. Exhibits will be added bit by bit to explain the history of the mill and its central role in the economic life of Bristol. It will be three to five years before we are done, but we plan to have a variety of displays starting this summer (2024). Exhibit topics will change over months and years so there will always be something new to see or learn.

This effort has been funded locally, supplemented by a few small grants. The restoration work has been carried out by volunteers plus some very talented professionals. Ed Blaiklock from Woolwich got us started and did most of the structural refurbishing. ABL Roofing did most of the roof and wall shingling. Tom Kronenberger and his team of Rob O'Brien and Walter Dickerson brought their expertise and enthusiasm to the mill building in November and continued work into the spring, finishing up the back wall and adding safety features for the general public inside, with more work planned for the May timeframe. We are so fortunate to have attracted such talented timber-frame specialists who are putting your donated funds to good use.

Then there are the volunteers. We would not be this far along without them. Most Saturday mornings from 9 AM to noon find at least a few folks there to back up the pros, and there is always room for more helpers if you'd like to chip in. So much has been accomplished that we anticipate being able to open the main floor and undercroft of the Mill Museum to the public by early this summer season. Thank you to everyone who has helped make it all possible. We are grateful and excited!



Vintage Mill Equipment Sought – Do you know where we can obtain any of these?

- Grist milling equipment, including millstones.
- Carding machine and related equipment.
- Sawmill equipment.

If you can help us locate any of these, please send us an email with the subject “Mill Equipment” at oldbristolhistoricalsociety03@gmail.com.

OBHS Education and Outreach

by Anne Nord, Belinda Osier, and Jody Bachelder

The OBHS Education Committee has rekindled its relationship with the Bristol Consolidated School after a few years of pandemic hiatus. Julia Lane and Board members Belinda Osier, Anne Nord, and Jody Bachelder are working with teachers to bring history into their classrooms, and beyond. We began by inviting several teachers to the History Center to show them our exhibit on Bristol's general stores and share some of our resources that fit their curriculum.

Fifth grade teacher Wendy Arzate invited Jody to her classroom to share the story of Samoset and the Wawenock who lived on the Pemaquid peninsula. Students learned what Samoset's life was like before he met Europeans, and how dramatically his life changed as a result of this contact. Jody was tremendously impressed by the enthusiasm of Mrs. Arzate's students and their insightful and intelligent questions. To continue their studies about the Wabanaki and their culture, as well as early colonial life in Maine, Belinda will accompany the class on a field trip to Colonial Pemaquid at the end of May. This program, presented in collaboration with Colonial Pemaquid and Lincoln County Historical Association, was a valuable and popular experience for 5th graders before the pandemic, and we are very excited to help reintroduce it to Bristol students.

Second graders in Stephanie Shocki's class were treated to visits from Anne and Belinda, who shared photographs and a map of what Bristol schools looked like a hundred years ago and where they were located. In the 1920s there were several one and two-room schoolhouses, including the Washington School in Round Pond; the Longfellow School in Bristol Mills; the McKinley School in Pemaquid Falls; the Hawthorne School in Pemaquid Beach; and the Mavooshan School in New Harbor. Most students walked to school or, if lucky, got a ride in the family buggy or wagon. Mrs. Shocki's students were excited to try to find the school they would have attended on the map. Schoolhouses tended to be built and supported by local families or the local church.



Board member Anne Nord shows Stephanie Shocki's second grade class how to write on slate.

Children went to school to learn how to read, write, and decipher (math), but also to see their friends. Students sat according to grade level, with first graders in the front, then second grade, etc., and older children helped the younger ones with lessons. Mrs. Shocki's class acted out what it might have been like in a 1920s schoolroom. They sat up straight with hands folded on their laps, feet on the floor, and recited their lessons.



Students grades one to nine pose outside the Hawthorne School, Pemaquid Beach, c. 1911. (Courtesy of the Old Bristol Historical Society, Carla Chadwick Collection)

They also learned that schooling was informal in the 19th century, with students attending when they could. Helping out at home was of primary importance, and most children only went to school until the age of 14. Children were expected not only to do housekeeping and maintenance chores but to babysit younger children as well, so they often had to stay home. Many of Mrs. Shocki's second graders decided that a bus ride was preferable to walking to school (sometimes barefoot), and life was easier today because they didn't have to keep the school's woodstove burning or fetch water from a nearby stream for drinking!

To learn more about Bristol's schools from long ago, visit the OBHS website Resources page where you can find a link to Phil Averill's booklet, *Woodstoves and Backhouses: Schoolhouses of Bristol, Maine, 1800-2000*. You can also find photos of former Bristol schools and school children by doing a keyword search for "schools" in our online catalogue under Collections.

Cabot Lyford, Bristol's Sculptor

by Julia Lane

Cabot Lyford first came to New Harbor in the summer of 1953 as the newlywed husband of Joan Richmond. She was the daughter of Pauline Nickerson and Millard Richmond. Pauline's family included Osiers, MacFarlands and Bracketts, whose ancestors had lived in the area for generations and still do today. Millard came to New Harbor in the early 1900's the son of an accomplished Bangor concert pianist, Winfield Richmond, who sought a retreat in the newly formed colony on Chamberlain Point. Millard attended the many dances, soirees and social gatherings available in town at the time and met Pauline. They married and though his work as an audio engineer took them across the globe, they always returned to New Harbor. It was natural, then, for Joan to bring her new husband to the place dear to her family and heart.

Cabot had grown up inland in Waverly, NY on the Pennsylvania border and later in Scarsdale, NY, but he was no stranger to Maine, as his ancestors hailed from the Waterville area and his brother had attended Colby College. But the midcoast with its elemental maritime beauty won his heart. Although his



"Low Tide, New Harbor 1958" by
Cabot Lyford

career at the time was in television, art was his avocation. As a soldier in the Phillipines in World War II, he had relieved the stress and angst of combat by sketching and painting on the back of discarded papers. After the war, he gained a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Cornell and attended the Skowhegan School of Art in 1946. Inspired by the light and the many interesting subjects readily available in New Harbor, Cabot began painting local scenes. He worked "plein-air" in watercolor and for the rest of his life could be found sitting on the edge of a cove or headland capturing the moment in paint. The surviving pieces from the time depict not only the popular Pemaquid lighthouse and rocky coastal islands but workmen and boats in the harbor. One in particular, called "Frankie's Skiff" (1955) is an overhead view of Frank Osier, Joan's great uncle, bringing in the catch of the day. "Low Tide, New Harbor 1958" shows fishermen working on their boats beached on the harbor shore. Another large piece, titled "Fishermen in the Sun" (1960), is a stark seascape with men in dories hauling their nets as the sun beats down on them.

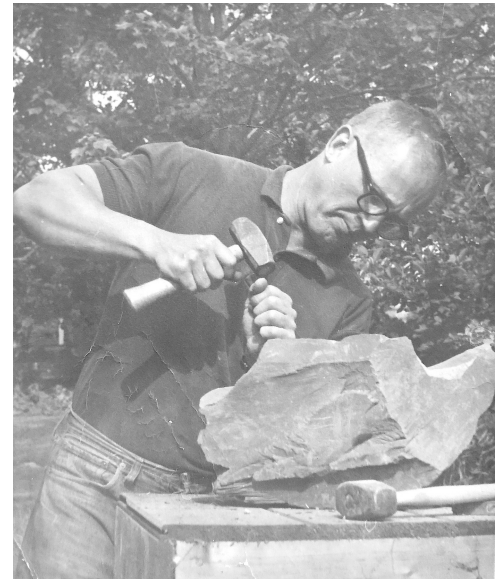
The couple returned to New Harbor every summer, sometimes for only a week or two. After their children arrived, Joan would stay in Maine longer with family while Cabot returned to Boston to work at WGBH and then Durham, NH where he helped established the public TV stations in New Hampshire and Maine. It was in Durham that he began pursuing his first love, sculpture. The family now lived in a real house, rather than an apartment, and a carport was available for him to work in stone and wood. Realizing he must choose between a career in TV which might necessitate a move to Washington DC, or to follow his muse, he chose the life of an artist. In 1963, a teaching position in the art department became open at Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, NH and Cabot seized the opportunity to have a full time job to provide for his growing family and also do the work to which he felt called.

Now he was able to come to New Harbor in the summer for long periods and he and Joan bought their own place at Pemaquid Beach. He built a studio behind the house and quickly began working using materials he found in the environment. He hefted boulders from stone walls or those shaped by the ocean up from the shore and released the figures he imagined in their shapes. Local arborists would provide him with unusual tree limbs and trunks which became animals or mythological beings often inspired by the ocean and the creatures which inhabit it- whales, dolphins, seals, fish, crabs, seabirds and mermaids.

Back in Exeter, he also maintained a larger studio in an old chicken house with no running water or heat. His work, laboriously crafted from raw stone and wood, began to attract international attention and commissions. Pieces were shown in prestigious galleries throughout the US and appear in numerous museum collections. Many public works can still be seen such as the 18-foot granite dolphins on Milk St in Portland titled "Life Force" (1978), or his masterpiece "My Mother the Wind" (1976) in Portsmouth harbor, a multi-ton granite figurehead depicting a mother and child running in the wind dedicated to the women coming to North American shores to find a better life.

When he retired from Exeter in 1986, he and Joan came to live in their Pemaquid home and he established a studio on the Old County Rd. In this spartan shell of an old house he continued to create a veritable menagerie in stone and wood, sometimes experimenting in metal, and welcomed curious visitors to enjoy his work there. Declared by critics to be the finest stone sculptor in New England most of the work found places in art-loving homes and gardens throughout New England and around the country. One piece that can be seen locally is a large granite horse, "Red Arab," placed at the Bristol School through the Maine Arts Commission's Percent for Art program.

Cabot Lyford died in 2016 at the age of 91, having created sculpture until he was 85 and painting until 90. His legacy of celebrating the beauty of Bristol's shoreline through art continues as his daughter, Julia Lane, curates his remaining works with Rachel Walls Fine Art in Portland (<https://www.rachelwallsfineart.com/cabot-lyford>). Together, with the Portsmouth NH Historical Society, they are organizing an extensive retrospective exhibit to celebrate his 100th birthday in 2025. In the meantime, they are offering prints of some of his working waterfront paintings to benefit the Maine Fishermen's Association's storm relief fund. For more information, please contact Julia Lane 207-529-5438 or email julia@castlebay.net.



Cabot Lyford, sculptor

Bristol History Center News

by Belinda Osier

On May 25, OBHS will once again begin welcoming visitors to the Bristol History Center for the season.

In the entrance room, visitors will be able to view a number of older Bristol maps mounted on the vault wall, as well as the Bristol history panels that were installed last year. A special exhibit will also feature the life and legacy of Samoset, prepared by Jody Bachelder, author of the book *Here First: Samoset and the Wawenock of Pemaquid Maine*.

Moving up to the Exhibit Room, this year's annual exhibit is titled "Round Pond Summers: Leisure, Fashion and Recreation, 1900-1910." It will feature the photographic work of Carrie "Cad" Nichols that was recently loaned to OBHS by Carrie's great niece, Elaine Murdoch. Visitors will see numerous images taken at the turn of the 20th century of Nichols family members engaged in fun activities such as hayrides, fishing, swimming and picnicking or simply creating humorous scenes and poses for entertainment. The images not only provide a window into the social entertainment of the day, but also show a broad and fascinating view of the days' fashions. Carrie Nichols was the daughter of James E. Nichols, a prominent Round Pond businessman, who appears in a number of the images. The exhibit is being curated by Chuck Rand, Elaine Murdoch, and Belinda Osier.



Nichols family and guests on an outing to the Pemaquid Hotel, Aug. 12, 1903

One other addition to the Center this summer is the availability of a new computer in the Reading Room for the use of patrons. Patrons will now be able to search our collection catalogue on site in order to identify items that they would like to view in person. With our collections now organized in the vault with specific shelf locations assigned, docents will be trained to be able to retrieve items upon request.

The History Center will be open from 10-1, Thurs.-Sat., May 25-Oct. 15. We look forward to a busy season!

A History of John's River: The River that isn't a River

by Pete Hope, author of a new book of the same name



The East Branch of the John's River and a section of the Harrington Road

Indigenous peoples lived off the resources of the river for millennia, going back to at least 3500-3700 BP. When Mike Cheney was building his house near Soldier's Cove he uncovered spear points in perfect condition. These were identified as ceremonial spear points from the Susquehanna culture. Cultures that followed, like the Woodland Culture, lived on the river's resources, leaving behind shell heaps on the river. The Wawenock were the most recent of these people.

You may never have thought about this but this "river" is like no other in the state because it has no freshwater tributaries. So technically it is an extension of John's Bay. The name came from a map of New England that John Smith, who coasted from the Bay of Fundy to Cape Cod in 1614, published in his book, *A Description of New England*, in 1616. The map shows St. John's Towne where the Pemaquid Peninsula is and from this comes the names of the bay, the island and the river.

The river was first settled by Scots-Irish pioneers who were brought here beginning in 1729 by Colonel David Dunbar. He named the area Harrington. At first the settlers had small farms where the entire family pitched in to eke out a living. Some, like William Sproul, the third son of James Sproul who came to Pemaquid Harbor in 1729, managed to get ahead. He had a farm and an inn on a bridle path where the first town road was laid out. Later this became the Harrington Road. The first town meeting was held in his inn in 1765 and Bristol was incorporated. He also had the lucrative position of a cattle pound keeper. After the Revolution he was the first in town to start building vessels.

Sproul's son, George, inherited his father's 200 acres and added another 120 acres. George died in 1820 and an inventory of his estate shows that he must have been a very prosperous farmer. One yoke of oxen/ one yoke of four year old steers/ one yoke of two year old steers/ five cows/ three three year old heifers/ two two year old heifers/ four yearlings/ 28 sheep/ one horse/ four shoats (young pigs)/ one bushel of corn meal/ 48 cords of wood/ a huge inventory of household and farm equipment. (His real estate was not included.) The inventory totalled \$2500.

Farmers on the river in the 20th century included my dad, Harvey Hope. A Yale philosophy major, he became a poultry farmer almost by accident. It was not part of his plan but he started a small scale poultry operation in Bremen around 1937. Ten years later, wanting to expand his operation, we moved to the Sproul/ Fossett/ Sherwood farm on the Harrington Road. He started with market eggs, shifted to hatching eggs, then to broilers and finally raising replacement layers. At one time he was raising 60,000 broilers.

Commercial lobstering in Maine started before the Civil War and I assume it did in the John's River. Two lobster pounds on John's River have contributed greatly to the lobster economy. In 1895 Isaac Harvey from Boston bought a pound by the High Island causeway. He did not lobster himself but bought from the local fishermen. He pounded them and then shipped them to his establishment in Boston. When he died in 1916 the pound was temporarily closed but his son took over the operation and continued it into the 1940s. In 1975 lobsterman Danny Cheney leased the old Riverview Lobster Pound from Percy Huey. He spent two years rebuilding it so it would hold lobsters. Then he started pounding lobsters and also took his son's and another man's. He operated the pound into the 2010s. Danny told me in an interview that the pound had been a big success for him. "I had gone through storing lobsters in crates or cars. I finally came to the conclusion that if you wanted to play the lobster market you had to do it by the way of a pound. You could hold the lobsters until the price went up." Danny was smart, hardworking and successful, with many more good years than bad. Danny, my best friend for years, died July 2, 2023.

With plenty of mud flats in the different branches the river has always produced softshell clams. Clams also grow in the rocks, sand and clay. The river has all of this. Traditionally clams were always dug with a hoe. In my day the hoe was a bent over spading fork with extra tines welded on. Sometime after WWII Raymond Wood, who dug in the Georges River, invented "picking." The clammer reaches a glove hand down through the siphon hole, pulls out the clam and puts it in his clam hod. Most diggers use one method but I did both and that was an advantage when the clam holes aren't showing or the tide doesn't go out far. I clammed for 45 years, all during school vacations except for the last 6-7 years when I clammed year round. Over that time I retailed clams at the door, sold to summer businesses, to wholesale buyers or to Spinney Creek Depuration Company which purified polluted clams. Almost all diggers around here today sell their clams to wholesale buyers. Another shellfish operation is David Cheney's oyster farm in the outside of the North Branch.

Over the years many vessels have been built in John's River's coves. Most were undocumented so nothing is known about them. In 1983 Peter Koss started John's Bay Boat Company on Poorhouse Cove. It is a full service operation but Pete and his three man crew specialize in traditional wooden lobster boats. They are works of art and there is a high demand for them with many repeat customers over the years.

The oldest house near the river was a Cape built by Robert Sproul (1716-1793). He was another son of James. His first wife, Anna Reed, died in 1756 and he probably built the Cape before then, after first living in a log cabin. There is a very interesting bit of family lore that has been passed down. Supposedly, there is a hidden chamber behind a fireplace to hide in during an Indian attack. The house is about a mile from the Four Corners, on the west side of Rt. 129. Originally the farm's property did not border the river but in 1826 Robert's son James bought 40 acres bordering the North Branch. This included a two story Federal which James moved across the road and attached to the Cape. The property was Sproul's until 1922. John Robinson bought the farm in 1959 and his grandson, John III, owns it today.



The Sproul/Robinson Cape/Federal

The river has had its share of characters over the years. One of my favorite characters was Sally McKown. Sally was the widow of William McKown who died in 1801. That year a son Robert was born and Sally, at the age of 37, was faced with the daunting task of caring for an infant and making a living. Sally had inherited William's 200 acres and house. The property is shown on William McClintock's 1815 survey map and the house is most likely the ell on Rachel Fossett's Cape on the sharp corner by the Pemaquid Harbor Road. The hill leading to Pemaquid Harbor is called "Sally's Hill." Sally died in 1829 and her probate records show that she got by very well. She had 23 sheep/ three milk cows/ one two year old heifer/ five lambs/ 56 pounds of butter/ 36 pounds of flax/ 28 pounds of wool/ one and a half bushels of beans/ one and a half bushels of peas/ ? bushels of barley and 56 bushels of potatoes. Sally undoubtedly sold or bartered potatoes, butter, milk and linsey-woolsey, a coarse fabric made from her flax and wool. Sally was a brave, resilient, resourceful and hard-working woman.

John's River has had an interesting history and today supports various jobs. It's a great place to recreate—to fish for mackerel, bluefish or stripers, duck hunt, sail, waterski, etc. We who live here really love John's River for its beauty and serenity.

Volunteer Opportunities – Do you have an interest or skill to share?

Getting involved with OBHS is a great way to meet people, learn about Bristol History, enrich our community, and have some fun. Here are a few ways to get involved.

- Museum hosts and docents.
- Reception table hosts for speakers and other events.
- Landscaping and gardening work.
- Carpentry and other hands-on work.
- Membership database administrator. Communications administrator.
- Fundraisers.
- Website design and management.
- Newsletter and other publication people.
- Meeting minute takers.
- Museum exhibit designers and creators. Artists. Writers. Historians.
- Almost everything we do involves teams. We can always use more team members and more good ideas!

If you are interested in volunteering, or if you would like to learn more, please send us an email with the subject "Volunteer" at oldbristolhistoricalsociety03@gmail.com.

Volunteer Spotlight: Nancy Dickinson



OBHS volunteer Nancy Dickinson

Nancy moved here with husband Mike in 2013, upon their retirement from Cornell's administration. After raising two children and restoring an 1850s farm near Ithaca, they wanted to move to the coast. While attending the historic Hog Island Audubon Camp, Nancy discovered the Pemaquid area and knew it was perfect, with natural beauty and a friendly year-round community. (And they were pleased to purchase a modern home needing little work!) Nancy also volunteers with Friends of Hog Island in many roles, including as a gardener learning about native plants. Nancy and Mike supported the Pemaquid Mill purchase and restoration from the beginning, and she was pleased to join the grounds restoration team to help create a natural park near home. Nancy also enjoys decorating the History Center with welcoming container plants each summer, glad to contribute what she can. Thank you, Nancy, for helping to restore the natural beauty of our riverside site! We deeply appreciate your creative, thoughtful leadership.

Old Bristol Historical Society Speaker Series, 2024

Mark your calendars!

Spring Speaker Series

In collaboration with Lincoln County Historical Association

May 9 Ronald C. White, speaking about his recent book *On Great Fields: The Life and Unlikely Heroism of Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain*. This will be an online presentation only, Thursday at 5:30 p.m. Register in advance; information will be on our website and Facebook page.

The following presentations will be in person at the Bristol Congregational Church in Bristol Mills, Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. (with the exception of July 28 which will be at the Learning Center at Pemaquid Point Lighthouse Park). Members attend for free, \$5 fee for non-members.

Summer Speaker Series

June 30 Belinda Osier, "Down Memory Lane: The Pemaquid Messenger"

July 14 Gerry Gawalt, speaking about his recent book *The Ordeal and Triumph of Pemaquid's John Gyles*

July 28 Mark Leslie, "Underground Railroad in Midcoast Maine" (Note: this presentation will take place at the Learning Center at Pemaquid Point Lighthouse Park directly after our Annual Meeting)

August 11 Chris Davis, "History of Aquaculture in Midcoast Maine"

August 25 Bill Bunting, speaking about his book *A Day's Work: Maine People at Work, 1860-1920*

Fall Speaker Series

In collaboration with South Bristol Historical Society

September 22 John Roberts, "Past, Present, and Future of The Lincoln County News"

October 20 Carol Gardner, speaking about her book *The Involuntary American: A Scottish Prisoner's Journey to the New World*

If you or your business are interested in becoming a sponsor for our speaker series, please contact OBHS at oldbristolhistoricalsociety03@gmail.com or (207) 677-6011. We'd be happy to talk to you.

The Importance of Giving

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this spring newsletter.

Old Bristol Historical Society is growing, and with it, our community impact. Our volunteers are working with teachers and students in the Bristol Consolidated School. The Bristol History Center will debut new seasonal exhibits on Memorial Day weekend. We have a vibrant lecture series planned, and the Mill Museum will open to the public for the first time this summer. Central to our core mission, we have hired a part-time Collections Manager who is building upon the significant collections work of Chuck Rand over the past decade. We are known for our state of the art, secure, climate-controlled collections vault. We are looking to expand our collaboration with other regional organizations. OBHS has also recently hired a part-time Executive Director whose principal focus is securing the resources needed for our future. There's a lot happening!

As time marches on, events beyond our control inevitably shape our community and change it. Old Bristol Historical Society is our community's constant memory, preserving and making available what has come before us.

Your support is essential to Old Bristol Historical Society, and to the work that we collectively do and aspire to do.

At this time of year, we ask in this newsletter for you to consider renewing your membership, if you haven't already. Equally important is our annual appeal for operating support, which is normally our focus in the fall. Our big projects such as creating the Bristol History Center, restoring the mill building and opening the Mill Museum, and establishing Pemaquid Falls Park are made possible by the capital gifts with which so many of you have been very generous. As always, planned giving and endowment building is a required long-term strategy. There are many ways to support the future of OBHS!

This is an exciting time. Thank you for moving OBHS forward!

Michael Chaney, Executive Director

Mark Ziarnik, Board President



The bell house at Pemaquid Point, which suffered substantial damage during a January storm.



PO Box 87, Bristol, ME 04539

2024 Membership Form

Note: Payment for memberships may also be submitted online through the "Support" link at www.oldbristolhistoricalsociety.org.

Name(s): _____

If you have different surnames, help us to improve our database. Please circle which name that you would like to designate as the primary member. You'll be less likely to get duplicate mailings. Thanks.

Email: _____ Email: _____

Phone: _____ Phone: _____

Preferred Mailing Address: _____

Check here if this is a new address: _____

Alternate Address (if different): _____

Single	\$15 _____	Friend	\$50 _____	Benefactor	\$500 _____
Household	\$20 _____	Supporter	\$100 _____	Partner	\$750 _____
		Patron	\$250 _____	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.

I would also like to make a donation in the amount of \$_____ for the following:

Where Needed Most: _____ The Mill Museum: _____ The History Center: _____ The Grounds: _____

Check here if your payment will be submitted separately via PayPal or other method: _____

Check here if you would like us to reach out to you about volunteer opportunities: _____

Thank you.

Old Bristol Historical Society is a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. Donations to OBHS are tax deductible as allowed by law. Our Federal Tax ID number is 30-022256.

Old Bristol Historical Society – Spring 2024 Newsletter

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Bristol, ME 04539