

Thomaston Historical Society

Spring Newsletter No. 46 - May 2017 to November 2017

This year is shaping up to be even busier than last year with lots of new projects – an even greater need for volunteers to help support the expanding services and projects we sponsor. You can donate a few hours to help us make greater progress in cataloging our collection – we are uncovering some fascinating gems. OR “loan” us your house for our house tour fund-raisers. Would you like to help us honor our war veterans in profiles we are building or be included in the summer parade? What about help with an archaeological dig or cemetery monument cleaning that are in the planning stages? Volunteering can be fun while learning about fascinating history and helping the society at the same time.

ANNUAL MEETING – JUNE 13th

Hold the date -- our annual meeting will be at 7 pm on June 13th at the Knox Farmhouse Museum. After a review of activities and a vote on the 2017-2018 board, we will hear a talk on the history and rebuilding of the Wadsworth Street Bridge.

WANTED: Historic Houses

We are looking for houses to feature in this year's

Summer House Tour (July)* and *Home for the Holidays 2017 Gala (December)

In addition to a chance to make new friends interested in Thomaston and its historic homes, there are other special benefits for the hosts:

- History of your home researched by THS Historian, Peggy McCrae
- 1-year membership for non-member hosts
- Reimbursement up to \$80 (w/receipt) for housecleaning

If interested, please contact: Mimi Zwick (354-7029 or mbzwick48@gmail.com) as soon as possible.

A Garden Tour Addition to our Summer House Tour!

We are delighted to announce that in addition to our historic Summer House Tour in July (assuming we find one), we will be featuring the beautiful gardens of Patricia Hubbard at 31 Dunn Street, here in Thomaston. Using a no-till method, the gardens were laid out in a mandala design in 2005 and have been evolving ever since. An outdoor Victorian tea will also be available for visitors while touring the gardens.

The Hubbard House was formerly the home of Sally Hill, a Thomaston native and the first president of the Thomaston Historical Society. She is also the author of *Tall Ships, White Houses and Elms-Thomaston, Maine 1870-1900*. Copies of the book will be available for purchase at the Hubbard House.

Nancy Hill, Sally's daughter, will be serving tea in the garden. She will be using some of the beautiful silver serving pieces that have been passed down through her family from ancestor Captain Harvey Mills.

Several vessels sailed out of Thomaston Harbor under his command, including the *Colonel Adams*, *Eliza McNeil*, *Henry L. Richardson*, *Harvey Mills*, *James Nesmith*, *Joseph S. Spinney* and *Samuel Watts*.

Detailed information for this event will be available on our website, www.ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com in June.

Mimi Zwick, Chair—Historic Houses, Thomaston Historical Society

Tour Dragon Cement Plant in Thomaston

In driving past the giant facility on Route 1 in Thomaston, with quarries on one side and a large plant on the other, have you ever wondered what was inside? Now is your chance to find out and tour Dragon Cement Plant with us.

Thomaston, Maine is built on a wedge of Precambrian rock. The limestone it contains has supported the lime and cement industries in this area for 300 years. Small kilns to process product lime were often found on small farms as lime was used to improve soil quality and was a main ingredient in plaster for building homes. Dragon Products is the last Thomaston operation to quarry the stone and the only remaining large cement production facility in New England. To celebrate this long history, Thomaston Historical Society, in partnership with Dragon Products, is offering two tours of the plant on August 21. During the tour, you will hear about the modern cement manufacturing process starting with the quarrying of limestone. At the end of the tour, there will be a chance to ask questions of managers in the quiet of a conference room where refreshments will be served by the historical society.



The Dragon Cement Plant tours on August 21st will start at 10 am and 1 pm, each lasting about 2 to 2.5 hours. The cost is \$30, discounted to \$25 for members of the Thomaston Historical Society or the Boothbay Railway Village. If you are thinking about signing up for the Dragon Cement Plant tour, keep in mind that there will be a lot of walking and climbing of stairs. For more information, contact info@ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com. You can make reservations by sending a check to Thomaston Historical Society, PO Box 384, Thomaston, ME 04861. Please note that the payment is for the Dragon tour.

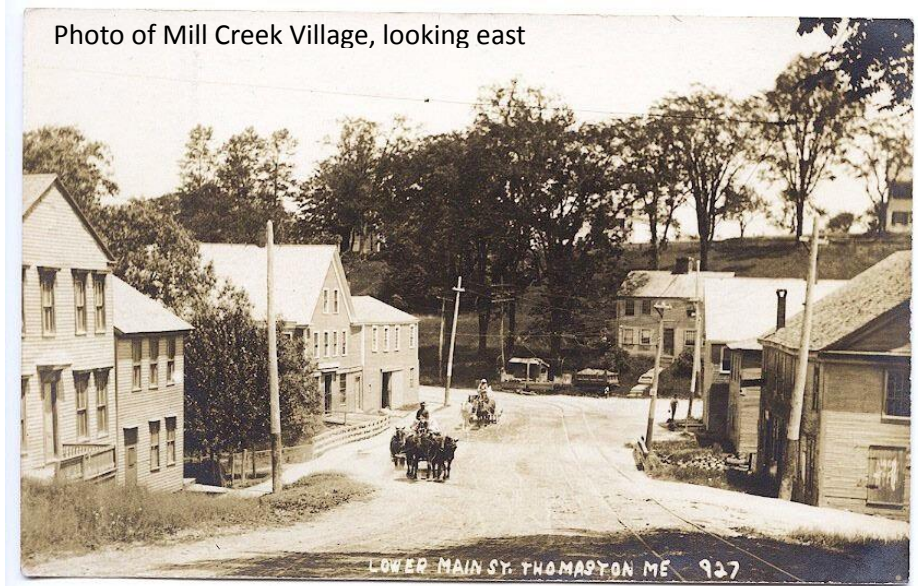
This opportunity is being offered in conjunction with the Boothbay Railway Village, who is hosting the Maine Coast Stone Symposium during the month of August. This celebration of the history, art and culture of Maine's stone industry includes stone-working demonstrations, talks by artists, stone-workers, and members of the stone industry, and the exhibit *Built with Stone: The Granite, Limestone, and Slate Industries in Maine*. To learn more visit www.railwayvillage.org.

Space is limited – reserve your tickets early. Our tour last year of Lyman Morse sold out very quickly.

Thomaston's Two Birthdays

On March 20, 1777, a group of settlers broke away from their association with nearby Warren and formed a Town by the name of Thomaston. A tract of about 6,000 acres was set off, bounded on the NW by a line on the east side of the Georges River in the Oyster River area, running about seven miles to the line of Camden, and from there southerly to include what is now Rockland, South Thomaston and present day Thomaston, including all "the islands that lay within three miles of the mainland and within the direction of the lines that run to the sea."

On March 13, 1848, the town was further divided into three towns, which had already become the three well-established town settlements known as Thomaston, Shore Village or East Thomaston, and South Thomaston. Earlier attempts had failed during the previous two years to establish these divisions due to boundary disagreements. Thomaston's chief settlement at the time was known as Mill Creek Village and was the center of trade up until about 1820. When the bank was built at the Lower Corner (site of the former Highlands Café), the business district slowly migrated to the center of town, where it remains today.



So to this day, Thomaston can rightfully claim two birthdays: one being March 13th - when she passed her 169th birthday this year, and on Mar 20th - when she quietly passed her 240th birthday. As with any grande dame, she can choose to claim whichever year most benefits her upon the occasion.

In the future, more prominent mention of either one or both of these dates should be made on a yearly basis to keep these important dates in mind, and perhaps even a birthday cake might be in order!

Peggy McCrea, Historian

Archaeological Timeline for Thomaston

Come spring, archaeologist Harbour Mitchell will be setting out stakes and surveying the grounds adjacent to the historical society in preparation of an archaeological dig – likely starting in June. As time progresses and a firm plan is decided upon, Harbour hopes to lead a team of volunteers in an attempt to search for possible artifacts from early settlements in the area. Since this will be undertaken on private property, the project will be closely monitored and only those authorized to be present will be allowed access. If you have any interest in becoming more involved, please contact us.

Peggy McCrea, Historian

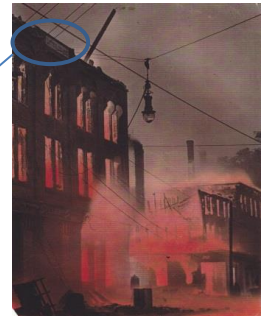
Retired History – New Museum Artifacts

Several donations this year have started a new type of collection for the Thomaston Historical Society, which Pete Lammert named “Retired History” with the first item. Here are the new pieces to stop by and see:

- Footing and Iron Fence Part from Knox Gravesite - When excavating last summer for the new fence during the restoration of Major General Henry Knox’s grave, we found buried five of the footings from the original 1855 iron fence. We also found two fence pieces. We auctioned off some of the footings to raise some money, but you can see one that will be placed at the grave site and another beside the front entrance of the museum. The fence pieces are in the museum.



- Granite Marquee from Original Watts Hall – During the excavation around Route 1 near St. John’s Church, part of block that fell from the original Watts Hall that burned down in 1915 was found buried. The original block said WATTS BLOCK 1890. On the grounds of the museum we have the part that shows LOCK 18. It weighs an estimated 300 lbs.



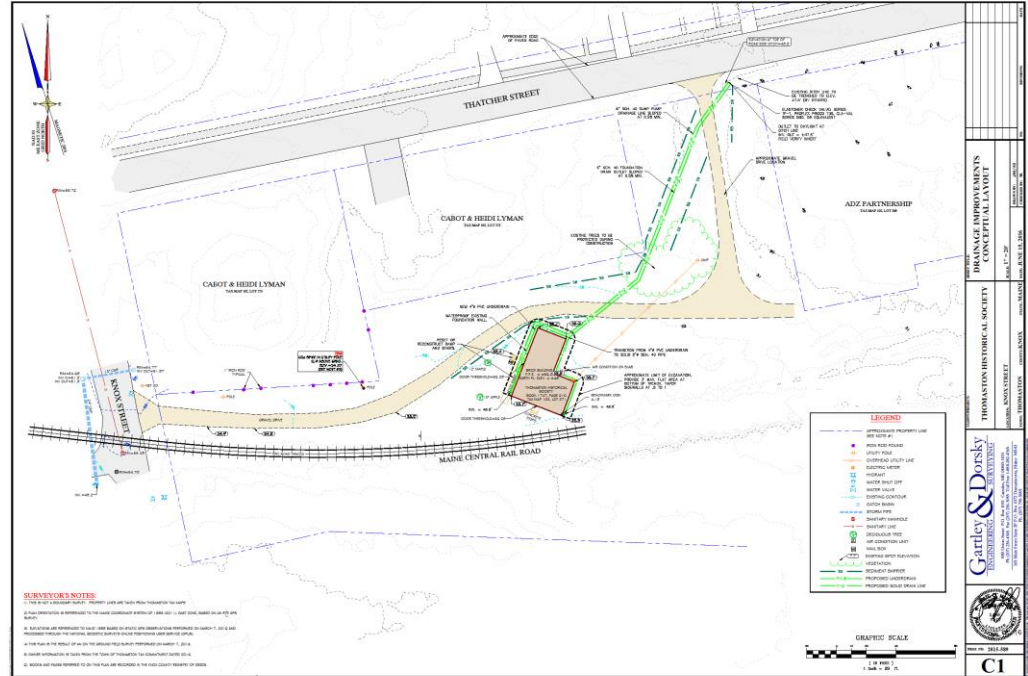
- Trolley Rails – Excavation during the repaving of Route One uncovered discarded rails from the old trolley tracks. Pete Lammert notified us, suggesting that we find ways to repurpose part of the rails found as commemorative book ends or door stops. This wonderful idea was implemented, thanks to help from Lane Construction and Rockport Steel. The pieces sold off almost immediately and we made over \$1,400 for the Historical Society. You can see a larger piece of rail on display at the museum. The trolley operated through Thomaston from 1893 to 1931.
- Wadsworth Street Bridge Parts - We now have the sign that was on the Wadsworth Street Bridge in the museum and soon will have a piece of the bridge on display on the lawn outside of the museum. The bridge was constructed in 19xx and replaced in 2016.



Susan Devlin
President and Curator

Knox Farmhouse Restoration - Stage 1 Update

As reported in our fall newsletter, our number one restoration issue is the water remediation to protect the foundation of the Knox Farmhouse Museum. With the help of Gartley & Dorsky, who developed the detailed engineering plan for a drainage ditch to capture water around the building which will be removed through a pipe to the storm ditch on Thatcher Street. This will require removal of our ramp for wheel-chair access, which is no longer up to code. We also have approval from MDOT to place the new ramp out towards the road which is more inviting.



In order to complete the drainage project and new wheel-chair ramp, we need to raise \$62,400. We are now in the fund-raising stage – identifying sources and writing grants. Meeting this goal will require raising money from multiple sources – foundations, corporations and private donations. Three applications have been submitted so far and two are in the works. We just received news that the Davis Foundation has awarded us \$15,000, the maximum they will give to any applicant!

We hope to break ground in the fall so that the museum will have easy access during our busy period – but it all depends on funds.

We also have learned that we will need to replace our furnace in the near future. It was not of the highest quality to begin with and has been sitting in a wet environment. So stage 2 will be started immediately after the moisture abatement project is complete – no time to relax.

Bill Eberle
Farmhouse Restoration Chair

Susan Devlin & Ursula Kruse-Vaucienne
Grant Writers

Profiling Veterans of the Korea & Vietnam Wars - An Update

With help from John Upham and others, we have been contacting veterans of the Vietnam era to learn their stories. We already have a special exhibit about Arthur “Jack” Elliot who was killed in action in Vietnam.

Our interview with Cliff Blastow tells a story that goes beyond just service in Vietnam to 25 years of service to his country.



John Upham



Cliff Blastow

We are so fortunate that two of Major Sayward Hall's sons have shared their father's story and memorabilia. This home town boy who served in Korea before the Army sent him to West Point later died of wounds from a Viet Cong attack.

There are many more veterans who we want to honor. Sadly, many Viet Nam veterans are still troubled by their treatment during and after their service to their country and not willing to be interviewed yet. Help us identify them and convince them that it is important to profile their service to their country.

We want to thank all veterans for their service and sacrifices – some as volunteers and others as draftees.



Sayward Hall

Susan Devlin
Curator

Other New Projects on the Drawing Boards

We are working on three other project ideas:

- Electronic Exhibits - We plan to use Major Hall's story and the materials the family shared to develop our first electronic exhibit at the museum. This allows us to expand what can be seen at the museum beyond the physical limitations of the space in the building
- Self-Guided Walking Tours – Several times Peggy McCreia has done walking tours and her talks about streets in Thomaston could be repackaged and enhanced by a walk down the streets. We are planning a way to clone her with guided tours that are accessed and directed via Smart Phones. We can even connect the history to locations of former residences in Thomaston Cemetery. Bill Eberle and Peggy hope to collaborate on this – possibly with the help of U of Maine interns.
- History of the Maine State Prison - Dr. William Hinkle, PhD in Criminal Justice, wants to write an in depth history of the Maine State Prison system. He has written several books on other prison systems and is fascinated by the long history and evolution of the Thomaston prison. This text will go far beyond the current picture book -- for those who want to dig deeper and for students and professionals. He has asked for our support with access to materials and pictures and introductions. He will visit in May. There will be no cost to us and credit will be given for our involvement.

New Donations Expand Our Knowledge and Raise New Questions

Recent additions to our collection not mentioned earlier include the following:

- New England Must Not Be Trampled On – book donated by author Roger Ginn
- 1882 Price List from Maine State Prison Store - from Joline Webber
- 1952 article about Rockland, Thomaston & Camden Trolley – from Rockport Steel
- 210 photos about Maine State Prison (circa 1950s-1970s) – from Brenda Sylvester Peabody
- Photos and notes from Waterford, Ireland regarding Alfred D. Snow, near where ship sank – from Betsy White
- Pictures from Fire Chief Mike Leo's retirement party – from Val Blastow
- Bottles of Medication/Generic Drugs with wooden case from McDonald's Drug Store – from Jesse & Mathew Weaver
- Video tapes of interviews of WWII veterans and Maine stories – from Thomaston Public Library

- Iron cot from Maine State Prison – from Peter Lammert
- “Prison in Thomaston Maine, 1824-1953” compiled by Warden Allan Robbins – from John Upham
- Photos and brochure about building/dedication of Wadsworth Street Bridge – from Peggy McCrea, Galo Hernandez and Susan Devlin

Work continues as we document our collection in the PastPerfect museum management software. We are finding that many of our archived items are not stored properly for long term preservation. We are repacking items as we catalog the collections which is taking a long time. We desperately need volunteers to help with this.

Susan Devlin
President and Curator

Victorian Tea on April 2nd

Fifteen of us shared a high tea at the museum to launch our new Victorian Fashion exhibit, planned by Assistant Curator Desiree Genthner. Guests enjoyed assorted sweets and savories with their tea, served by board members in period dress, and learned about the evolution of fashion during the Victorian era.



2017 Programs

All programs will be at the Thomaston Historical Society building at 80 Knox Street unless otherwise indicated. The building is open at 7:00 P.M. for viewing exhibits, refreshments and socializing, and the programs begin promptly at 7:30 P.M.

Tues. May 9th – Early Gravestones. Author and researcher, Ron Romano, will talk about early gravestones and will guide us through the artistry of the stonecutter’s carvings on the headstones and their meanings.

Tues. June 13th – Wadsworth Street Bridge – Then and Now. Peggy McCrea will prepare a talk about the history of the Wadsworth Street Bridge and the impact it has on Thomaston as we welcome the new bridge.

Sat. July 8th - Fourth Annual Summer House Tour and Garden Tour

Sat. July 22th - General Henry Knox Memorial Service. This 10:30 A.M. service honors Revolutionary War General Henry Knox, who was also the first Secretary of War. It takes place at the gravesite in the Thomaston Town Cemetery off Erin Street.

Tues. Aug. 8th – Midcoast Maine’s Finnish History and Culture. Stephen Gifford will talk about the local Finnish population, history, and culture in the Midcoast area.

Fri. Aug. 21st – Dragon Cement Plant Tour. See earlier article for more detail.

Tues. Sept. 12th – Honoring our War Veterans. This reception and program will showcase local veterans of the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Tues. Oct. 10th – Shipbuilding in the Midcoast. Author and historian, Bill Bunting, will talk about the rich history of shipbuilding in the Midcoast area.

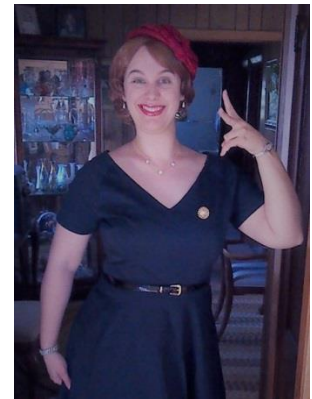
Fri. /Sat. Dec. 8-9 - Home for the Holidays House Tour. The house featured will have a Friday reception from 5 to 7 P.M. with wine and hors d'oeuvres, live music, and a small live auction. The tour and silent auction continue on Saturday between 10 A.M. and 3 P.M. Reservations are needed for the Friday night event and tickets may be purchased at the door on Saturday.

Aleta Kilborn
Program Chair

Meet Desiree Genthner – Assistant Curator

Desiree was raised in Rockland and her passion for history was influenced by her grandfather's appreciation of the past. After graduating from Rockland District High School, Desiree pursued her Bachelors in Small Business Management at Thomaston College. She went on to work as an administrative assistant and later found herself in education. It was here that she developed a desire to return to school, to harness her love of history.

She started with the Thomaston Historical Society in 2013, as an intern while working toward her Bachelors in History with the University of Maine. Her first role was researching and creating Civil War veteran profiles for the State of Maine Civil War Trail. Since then, Desiree has joined our Board as Assistant Curator and contributes to the creation of exhibits (such as our "WW2 Veterans" and "Victorian Fashion" displays). She also has created special events—a WW2 ice cream social, movie night and most recently a Victorian Tea, and runs our "Did You Know?" section on our Facebook page.



Desiree is now pursuing her Master's in Public History (through Southern New Hampshire University), and is currently working on her thesis. She lives in Wiscasset and is a guide for Historic New England as well as serving our Board.

Route 1 Construction Sale – 20% Off at Museum Store

Please stop by the museum to see what we have in our little shop area. We are continuing our 20% off sale on most of the items, including the beautiful Barnabus Webb gold-plated brass ornament designed by Thomaston's historian, Peggy McCrea; the book "The Town That Went to Sea" about Thomaston, our nostalgic 1878 Thomaston Map, mugs and other items. Check our website for the entire list of items or come in to see them and our exhibits.

Aleta Kilborn
Secretary and Store Manager

Volunteer and Learn About Thomaston History

Interested in local history? I hope you are. Our members and volunteers get first-hand knowledge of Thomaston as it was in the 1700's, 1800's and beyond, and have the opportunity to spread the good news to the public. We depend on you...

The Thomaston Historical Society is one of the most active societies in Maine and we are grateful for the support and enthusiasm our members bring to the society. Without your membership, contributions, and the support of businesses in the area, financially, as well as in kind, we could not present the many talks, launch new exhibits, and sponsor the projects we undertake.

If you are not a member yet, here are two ways that you can join or renew your membership for this fiscal year, July 2017 to June 2018. The mailing address is Thomaston Historical Society, PO Box 384, Thomaston, ME 04861. Or join online at <http://www.thomastonhistoricalsociety.com/membership.html>. Individual membership is \$18, Family membership is \$25 and Business membership is \$50 per year.

To share any suggestions or to become a volunteer, please contact me at membership@ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com. We depend on you...

Ursula Kruse-Vaucienne
Membership Chair

THOMASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL (7/2017 – 6/2018)

Membership in the Thomaston Historical Society helps preserve the rich history of our community, provides programs for schools and the general public, and helps maintain our museum. Members receive discounts on all goods and special events. Your membership and any donation is tax deductible.

- Individual Membership (\$18)
- Family Membership (\$25)
- Business Organizational Member (\$50)
- New Member
- Renewal

Please complete and send this form with payment: Attention Membership, Thomaston Historical Society, PO Box 384, Thomaston, ME 04861

For more information, visit our website at www.thomastonhistoricalsociety.com.

Mr. Mrs. Ms M/M First Name _____ Last Name _____

Company/Organization _____ Phone _____

Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Sending our newsletter electronically will significantly reduce costs and allow us to expand to two newsletters each year with more historical topics of interest. ***Please provide your email address if you are willing to have us email the newsletter to you.***

E-mail address: _____

The Thomaston Historical Society is an entirely volunteer organization, and thus depends on members and the community to help maintain our museum and provide the free programs that we offer. Volunteering can help fill a one-time need, give occasional support for special events, or make a continuing commitment. Please let us know if you are willing to be contacted when help is needed:

- Yes, you can contact me

Please check off any of the sample areas of support listed below that may be of interest to you:

- Sit as host at the farmhouse museum during the summer hours (either occasionally or regularly)
- Provide refreshments for one of our programs
- March in the July 4th parade or help build the new float for the parade
- Set up new museum exhibits
- Help catalog the museum artifacts
- Plan and/or help maintain the landscape around the museum
- Help with our Summer House Tour or our *Home for the Holidays* fundraisers.
- ???

Summary of Payment Enclosed:

Membership Dues _____

Donation _____

Total _____