

Thomaston Historical Society

Fall Newsletter No. 47 – November 2017



We continue to expand our scope and exposure beyond our traditional museum hours and talks. We are working with the town on a new exterior, retired history exhibit, arranging our third tour of a local business reflecting the heritage of Thomaston, and continuing our effort to profile Thomaston veterans. We have been approached by the Middle school about how we can help their local history programs. We also look forward to work with other organizations on joint projects. We have lots of other exciting new ideas to help support the community and preserve its rich heritage, limited only by the need for more volunteers to help.

We also are excited about the energy that some new board members are bringing. Brooks Stevens has joined us as Financial/Investment Chair. Sally Tabbutt Ploski has returned to Maine and joined our board as Membership Chair. Ron Gamage has just recently agreed to be our new Treasurer. Ron is profiled in this newsletter and we plan to tell you more about Sally and Brooks in future newsletters.

Let's look back at some of our successes this year and forward to plans for the future.

Susan Devlin

President, Thomaston Historical Society

Last Event of 2017 - Home for the Holidays on December 8th and 9th

This year we will be celebrating our 11th Home for the Holidays fundraiser at the home of Adrienne Burger on 48 Green Street in Thomaston. This beautiful Greek Revival home, known as the Morton Lermond House, was built circa 1847 by Thomaston shipwright/carpenter Albert Morton and/or Charles Lermond. Some of its unique features include dual front entrances, dual front rooms, dual staircases and dual master bedrooms!

This annual event opens on Friday, December 8 with a wine reception that includes live music by the Teacups, a Live Auction that will be called by Bruce Gamage and a representative from Thomaston Place Auction Galleries as well as a Silent Auction that is available to house guests on both Friday and Saturday.

The house is open for touring on Saturday between the hours of 10 AM and 3 PM. Gala tickets are \$20 for non-members and \$18 for members and are limited to 100 for Friday evening. Tickets for just Saturday are \$10 for non-members and \$8 for members and are unlimited. Friday night tickets are good for both days. For more information contact Mimi Zwick at 354-7029.



Mimi Zwick, Chair of House/Garden Tours

Saluting Thomaston Veterans

For the past few years we have been profiling Thomaston citizens who went to war, first the Civil War and World War II. Our goal is to tell their personal stories and to thank the men and women who served and their families for the sacrifices they made, whether volunteers or drafted. This year we started on the Korean and Vietnam.

On the evening of September 12th, we told the stories of three who died serving in Korea or Vietnam: Tauno Brooks, whose plane was shot down in Korea in 1952; Sayward Hall, who was mortally wounded at Camp Holloway in Vietnam in 1965; and Arthur Elliot, killed when his River Boat Squadron was ambushed on the Vam Co Dong River in 1968. The memorable part of the evening was the stories that family and friends shared about each man.

We want to continue this project, expanding to cover the stories of veterans who served either during wartime or peacetime, but we need your help in identifying them.

We are also planning to have a pot-luck lunch or dinner reception near Veterans Day next year for veterans and their family. This is going to be a joint effort with other organizations. If you have ideas or want to help, perhaps by just bringing a covered dish and joining us, let us know.

Susan Devlin and Sally Ploski, Veteran Reception Chairs



Sayward Hall



Tauno Brooks



Arthur "Jack" Elliot

First Garden Tour Was Tremendous Success – And a Lot of Fun

Our first Summer Gardens Tour and High Tea took place on Saturday, July 8, 2017 from 1-4 PM. Registration for the event began at Patricia Hubbard's home with 60 people participating in the tour of six Thomaston gardens. Maps were provided with the names and locations of the area gardens, each of which had at least one representative of the Thomaston Historical Society to meet and greet attendees. The gardens featured for this inaugural event were owned by Patricia Hubbard, Shirley Barlow, Benie and Bill Colvin, Susan and Frank Devlin, Margie and Sumner Kinney, and Roxanne Welles. A High Tea was available for all attendees during the event at Patricia Hubbard's home as well as a raffle for various gift baskets and floral donations. We look forward to showcasing more Thomaston gardens as our summer fundraiser in 2020.



Mimi Zwick, Chair of House/Garden Tour

Dragon Tour Was a Sell Out

On August 21st, 30 people had the opportunity to tour the Dragon Cement Plant. The August 21st tour sold out quickly and our waiting list was long. Dragon was kind enough to repeat the day again on October 4th.

What an experience! The guide took us under Route 1 to see the quarry which is 400 feet deep thus far. You could not even see the bottom of the quarry it is so deep. We went to the 9th story of in the tower used for processing the stone to lime and saw a phenomenal aerial view of Dragon and the surrounding area. We also saw the control room where the process is monitored 24/7.



Sincere thanks to Mark Curtis and Ray DeGrass for opening up Dragon for us, for sharing details about production and answering all our questions. What a wonderful member of our community this company is!

Ursula Kruse-Vaucienne, Tour Coordinator

Early Thomaston Potters

Many early towns in Maine had their own potter to keep up with local demands. Benjamin Clark, who manufactured plates and other common brownware, was Thomaston's first successful earthenware potter of record. He built a one-story house in the vicinity of Dr. Ludwig at 4 Main Street Mall from where he carried on a good business. He married Elizabeth (Betsey) Perkins Brown in 1797. He died within a few years and his wife remarried Deacon Charles Bradford from Plymouth, MA in 1802, who assumed the pottery business at the same location. Around 1819, the entire family moved to Ohio.

Tarbox of Biddeford, ME assumed Bradford's pottery business, building four additional kilns. Another potter by the name of Nathan Sella came about the same time, and the two may have set up business together since their wives were sisters. Sella died of consumption soon after his arrival.

James Tarbox moved to a few lots above the Green Street School, where his pottery business adjoined his house. His wife, Elizabeth Wormell, died in 1845, but he continued making bean pots and flower pots for another 30 years. The final listing for Tarbox pottery in the Maine Business Directory was in 1874-75. By then tinware was popular, leaving little demand for pottery.

The Tarbox house was torn down in 1884 and Mr. Tarbox died at age 90 three years later, at the time being the oldest citizen of Thomaston.

It is assumed the Tarbox pottery style was similar to that of John Auld with whom he studied. The Historical Society is very fortunate to have a surviving large brownware jug in its collection. If anyone knows the existence of other pottery pieces by him, we would be very interested in obtaining a photo.



Peggy McCrea, Historian

Remembering Bradley Beckett – Teacher & Thomaston Historian

Some of you may have had known Brad Beckett as your grammar school teacher or as a teacher for your children. He wrote the book "A History of Thomaston, Maine for Young Readers" (1994). He lost his battle with cancer just fifteen years ago this December.

His family donated over 40 copies of his book to the museum and we are working with the schools to plan a way to use these books and to celebrate the life of Brad Beckett. One idea is to create with the Middle School a Thomaston Historic Timeline with pictures and text that could run down one of the halls of the Lura Libby School after the building is converted to the town administrative building. Below the timeline would be murals from the Grammar School. Whether it is this project or the Then and Now study that may be created as part of the Local History Program, we will need some seed money.

Those who donate more than 10 dollars to the "Bradley Beckett Local History Fund" will receive a copy of the book as long as the supply lasts. To make a donation, send a check made out to the Thomaston Historical Society, noting it is for this fund, and mail it to PO Box 384, Thomaston, ME 04861. We will keep all donors on a mailing list to keep you apprised of the project.

Susan Devlin, President and Curator

Help Us Keep Our History Alive by Helping With One of These Projects

Here are some other ways you can help us expand our reach:

- ***Tech Design/Support for Smartphone Walking Tours*** - We need the technical know-how to transform Peggy McCrea's history of different streets into walking tours, cemetery tours, or water- front tours. We need someone who has the technical know-how to help us jump start this project
- ***Saluting Our Veterans*** – Help us interview veterans – or even just identify veterans to be interviewed to preserve their profiles... Or help us plan/implement the Salute to Veterans event next fall. Are you interested in helping us identify veterans to invite, putting a slide show together of veteran pictures, preparing dishes or helping coordinate the buffet?
- ***Cemetery Cleaning/Restoration or Sponsor a Grave*** – We are planning with the Thomaston Cemetery Committee a four day workshop next summer to jump start more cemetery restoration. Consider signing up as a student, making a donation to cover the cost or sponsoring the restoration/maintenance of a gravesite.
- ***Making Electronic Displays*** – Several of our projects tell stories through pictures, such as 20th century boat builders, veteran profiles, and stories of growing up in Thomaston. These would be best presented electronically and would allow us to expand our museum within the space we have. We need computer savvy individuals to help start this project or those interested in learning as we go.

New Donations Expand Our Knowledge and Raise New Questions

Recent additions to our collection include the following:

- Draft of "Sticky Boy" by Eric Lundin (never published) — from Ervin Koenig
- Minutes of Thomaston branch of Red Cross (1917-1928) — from Ervin Koenig
- Book: Historic Maps of Maine — from Muffy Cabot
- 1927 photo of Thomaston Basketball Team — from Robert Watts
- Book: The Gilchrest Papers by Renny Stackpole (purchased for our library)
- Old deeds to the Tilson Property on Old County Road — from Stephen Darney
- Old Sea Breezes & photo of J. Hinch — from Mike Mayo
- WW II V-Mail Letter Sheets — from Kay Sylvester
- Glass Plate negatives of the Smith House on School Street — from Jane Carr
- Collection about the Kirkpatricks, including Herbert (founded Thomaston Concert Band circa 1914) and Adele (telephone operator, with switchboard in their home) — from Stephen & Emily Lilienthal

Work continues on protecting and cataloging of our collection using PastPerfect museum management software. We desperately need volunteers.

Susan Devlin, President and Curator

Knox Farmhouse Restoration Starts May 2018

As reported in the last two newsletters, our number one restoration issue is water remediation to protect the foundation of the Knox Farmhouse Museum. In order to complete the drainage project and new wheel-chair ramp, we need to raise \$62,400. We have received two grants to cover half -- \$15,000 from the Davis Foundation and \$15,000 from the Belvedere Fund of the Maine Community Foundation. Selling a painting that has been housed permanently at the Farnsworth for us will cover the rest of this first stage of the restoration. Steve Josephs, our contractor for the drainage project, expects to break ground in May.

We are currently getting estimates for replacing our furnace (on its last legs), the gutters, and replacing the flooring in the archival room where moisture has penetrated through. So, Stage 2 will be started immediately after the moisture abatement project is complete – no time to relax.

Bill Eberle, Farmhouse Restoration Chair

Meet Our New Treasurer – Ron Gamage

Help us welcome aboard Ron Gamage to the Historical Society Board!

Being an “almost” mid-coast Maine native (born in New York) he is proud of his coming from a well-known shipbuilding family with many generations being of that craft. He grew up in Rockland and Owls Head and graduated from Rockland District High School in 1975. After working in the retail service for a few years, he received his Maine Real Estate Brokers license and went on to practice real estate for 15 years locally. As luck would have, it one of his clients called one day to say that he was ready to sell his convenience store that Ron had sold him a few years earlier. Always having the retail “bug” in his system, Ron told his client that he himself might be interested. Ron, his wife Jackie, and lots of dedicated employees ran the Waterfront Market on Wadsworth Street for many years.

To replace the bridge going over the St. George River it was required that the store would need to be razed to make that happen. The State of Maine purchased the property and Ron and his wife were out to see what life had in store for them next. His wife runs a hotel in Camden and Ron works for Hall Funeral Homes managing the Thomaston office.

They have two children: a son who lives and works in Union and a daughter who teaches school in Charleston, South Carolina. Ron and his wife are also proud parents of two “four legged” children – two year old “Parmchees” named Abby and Gracey who vie for their attention – and usually get it!

Ron has served on many town committees throughout his 30+ years of living in Thomaston. He currently sits on the R.S.U 13 School Board representing Thomaston and has been treasurer of the Orient Lodge of Masons in Thomaston for many years. Ron is looking forward to working with the Thomaston Historical Society as its new treasurer.



2018 Program Schedule – Talks Moving to Watts Hall

Our talks have been increasingly popular with three last summer packing the museum. To better accommodate all who are interested, we are moving our talks to Watts Hall. This will also allow us to expand our exhibit space on the first floor of the museum.

Thus, all programs will be at Watts Hall unless otherwise indicated. Refreshments and socializing starts at 7:00 PM and the programs begin promptly at 7:30 PM.

Tues. May 8th – Green Street Touchstones. Historian Peggy McCrea will guide us on a virtual tour of Green Street and talk about the houses and people who lived in them.

Sat. June 16th – Summer House Tour 1-4 PM. The tour is of 14 Elliot Street, a beautiful Federal home build in 1845 that overlooks the harbor and has lovely gardens. An outdoor tea and raffle baskets will be available.

Tues. June 19th – In Defense of Henry Knox. Dr. Bill McCarriston seeks to exonerate Major General Henry Knox's indictments by several authors through his research from the Archives of the Commonwealth of Mass. and elsewhere. He will discuss this research which is based on his monograph.

Sat. July 21th - 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. A reception follows on the Knox Museum grounds.

Tues. Aug. 14th – Stonewalling in Maine. Kevin Curtin, Ph.D. will talk about his research on stone walls in New England and the famous impoundment structures in Maine and who built them.

Aug. Date TBD – Brooks Trap Mill Tour. We are still finalizing the arrangements with Julie Brooks.

Tues. Sept. 11th – Thatcher Street Archaeological Dig Update. Harbour Mitchell, Archaeologist, will talk about the process and the findings from the June 2017 dig we sponsored.

Tues. Oct. 9th – Heirloom Apples. Our speaker will be John Bunker, the author of "Not Far From the Tree", a brief history of the apples and orchards of Palermo, Maine. He also established the Maine Heritage Orchard in Unity, home to 300 historic pears and apples.

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

Nov. Date TBD – Saluting our Veterans. Reception and potluck buffet for all veterans and their families.

Aleta Kilborn, Program Chair

Looking for Holiday Gifts - 20% Off at Museum Store

Please stop by the museum on any Tuesday afternoon, between 2-4 PM this holiday season and see what we have in our little shop for holiday gifts. We are having a special 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 ornament, which is already packaged in a box ready for gift giving and would go nicely with the book "The Town That Went to Sea" about Thomaston. We also have plenty of other interesting and informative books, mugs, note cards, lapel pins, and our nostalgic 1878 Thomaston Maps. Check our website for the entire list of items or come in to see them and our exhibits. So give the gift of Thomaston! Happy Holidays!



Aleta Kilborn, Secretary and Store Manager

Help Us Keep Thomaston History Alive

We are hoping to involve more local residents as volunteers and participants in our work to preserve and celebrate the history of Thomaston. Members receive discounts on some events and on purchases at our museum store.

- Individual Membership - \$18.00 per year
- Family Membership - \$25.00
- Business Membership \$50.00

The New Year is sure to bring many more exciting events and we hope you will join us. Our Museum is open every Tuesday from 2 pm to 4 PM this time of year – more often in the summer – and is completely free of charge. Remember that membership has its benefits. Please join us for everything the Thomaston Historical Society has to offer. Membership inquiries may be directed to Sally Ploski, smploski@gmail.com or you may join via our website at ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com.

Sally Tabbutt Ploski, Membership Chair