

# Thomaston Historical Society

Fall Newsletter No. 45 - November 2016 to May 2017

We are nearing the end of a very busy year for the Thomaston Historical Society. While it was much quieter than usual at the museum this summer – likely thanks to the disruptive but necessary road work on Route 1, our talks and expanding special events were very popular. About 65 attended the tour of Revolutionary War Soldiers given in May, jointly with the Lady Knox DAR Chapter. In July over 100 attended the dedication of restoration of General Henry Knox gravesite – the culmination of a two year effort. In September, the tours of Lyman Morse we sponsored as part of featuring 20<sup>th</sup> Century boatbuilding in Maine, sold out quickly. Highlights for some of these events are discussed below along with our final coming event for the year.

## *Home for the Holidays—2016*

It is hard to believe that we are preparing for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our annual fundraiser—*Home for the Holidays*! Over the past ten years, this event has grown in scope and interest and is attended by members and guests, not only from Thomaston but also from several area towns. It has truly become one of the “must attend” events of the holiday season! This event has expanded by introducing a Live Auction with local auctioneer Bruce Gamage, more offerings in the Silent Auction, and our Friday night Wine Reception has evolved into a true gala!

This year we invite you to visit the Hon. Joseph Sprague home at 225 Main Street, currently owned by Dr. and Mrs. William Colvin. Built in 1808, it is the oldest house featured thus far by the Thomaston Historical Society for our annual holiday fundraiser.

*Home for the Holidays* makes it possible for us to share Thomaston’s lovely historic homes with the community while raising funds to help meet our mission of preserving Thomaston’s history! This year the funds will go towards the major restoration needed for the Knox Farmhouse, which houses our museum.



Please join us on Friday, December 9 from 5-7 P.M. for our Wine Reception with music by the Harborside Harmony Chorus as well as Live and Silent auctions and/or Saturday, December 10 from 10 A.M. - 3 P.M. for our Open House and continuing Silent Auction. Tickets for Friday are \$18 for members and \$20 for non-members; tickets for Saturday are \$8 for members and \$10 for non-members. Friday night tickets are good for both Friday and Saturday. We look forward to seeing you and celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with you. Don't forget your checkbook! Please contact Frances Hernandez at 354-6924 for tickets.

May your holidays be safe and merry!  
Mimi Zwick and Mary Anderson Griffin  
*Home for the Holidays* Co-chairpersons

## ***Trolley History***

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The first trolley rails, approximately ten miles in length, ran from Rockland through Rockport to Camden in 1892. The following year two extensions were added: one from Rockland's Main Street to Blackinton Corners and Rockland Highlands; and the second from Rockland to Thomaston along Park Street and the New County Road (Route One today).

The track initially terminated at Mill Creek in Thomaston. C. H. Cushing operated a livery stable on Green Street and conveyed passengers between the Corner and the Mill River terminal. E. L. Dillingham

was a strong supporter of the electric car line being extended to the Upper Corner, where he was a partner in the firm of Chapman, Flint and Company on Kossuth and Main Streets. It was due to his influence that an affirmative Town vote for extension was accepted, at which time those gathered at the meeting gave three cheers. It was not until 1896 that an extension was finally completed from Mill Creek to Green Street, and another six years before a nearly 4.5-mile track was further extended to Warren for a total of 21 miles.

Thomaston's station waiting room, situated in the western corner of the former Telegraph Block (on the Watts Block site), had a capacity of 20 passengers. After the 1915 fire totally destroyed the Telegraph Block, the original Watts Block, Knox Hotel and stable, a new smaller station was built as replacement west of the rebuilt Watts Block.

A five-cent fare was initially charged, increasing to six cents in 1918, another penny the following year, finally reaching ten cents in 1924, a fare that remained until the railway's closure in 1931. Passenger service ran half-hourly along with a baggage, mail and express car that made three round trips daily.

The Warren line was terminated in 1925. The last run from Camden to Thomaston was scheduled May 31, 1931, but service was extended for a week in deference to the public being left without transportation facilities due to a lack of agreement over the Northeastern Transportation Company bus franchise.

Margaret McCrea  
Historian



## ***Trolley Rails – Mementoes from Abandoned History***

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Excavation during the repaving of Route One uncovered discarded rails from the old trolley tracks. Pete Lammert notified Peggy McCrea and Susan Devlin, suggesting that we find ways to repurpose part of the rails found as commemorative book ends or door stops. A wonderful idea – but we had to figure out the logistics.

Rockport Steel volunteered to sand blast and cut up the rails, but we had to get the two 17' pieces of steel to them. Lane Construction, which is doing the Route One road work, came to our rescue. With a fork lift they loaded them onto their flatbed truck and delivered them to Rockport Steel.

Sometime soon – likely in the spring – limited addition bookends/door stops will be available for purchase. The certificate of authenticity will include a photo of the trolley and a short history.

Susan Devlin  
President and Curator

## ***Knox Farmhouse - Protecting Thomaston History***

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Last October, our board decided to have an engineering firm formally assess water and moisture problems at THS's historical museum building on 80 Knox Street.

An architect friend recommended Gartley & Dorsky and we arranged a time for William Gartley to meet us at the building, assess the water problems, and, if he thought it necessary, make recommendations for a plan of action. After seeing all areas of the building, including the basement and the museum's extension which was built to safely store historical documents and artifacts, Gartley said that one urgent priority should be to prevent moisture from being absorbed by the concrete slab under the museum's archive storage extension.



We decided that our goals for safely maintaining Thomaston's historical papers and artifacts would require a complete ground water remediation project. This project will trap ground water and move it away from the building to protect the foundation of the original structure and the archive storage extension from ground water. One complicating factor is that we would need to gain approval from the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) and any related legal authority for the railroad tracks that run close to the southern corner of the building.

We retained Gartley & Dorsky for the initial Survey and Feasibility project phase and for coordination with the Town of Thomaston and MDOT followed by a design phase if the initial survey phase proved that it would be practical for us to move forward.

And move forward we have. With the Town of Thomaston's approval and assistance, a detailed engineering plan for water drainage and remediation is complete. An Underline Pipeline License Agreement from MDOT's Office of Freight & Business Services has been drafted with the help from Jim Strong and signed. We have requested and received bids for the necessary work. Now, we need to raise a significant amount of money to complete the drainage project as well as related projects including a new ADA compliant ramp and other restoration steps that need to follow: addressing some internal moisture damage issues, repairing/upgrading gutters, replacing an old, inefficient furnace, and installing a better, more efficient, air conditioning humidifier unit for the museum's archive storage room.

To learn more details about this project, please contact  
Bill Eberle at 354-0931  
Farmhouse Restoration Chair

## ***Knox Gravesite Restoration – Finished in Time for July Dedication***

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It was tight timing, but we finished the gravesite restoration in time to dedicate it during the Knox Memorial service on July 23rd. The repair/cleaning of the monument and side stones by Joe Auciello and the engineering drawings to guide installation by Alex Hernandez of Connor Homes, were done in plenty of time, but we could not commit to the manufacture and installation the new iron fence until the matching DAR grant was approved at the end of May. Dave Little of Winnepesaukee Forge was ready to move quickly on the fence and gate.

Ben Pratt ran into trouble when first attempting to dig for the footings for the fence. Huge boulders were hiding just underground on three sides of where the fence needed to be placed. Thomaston Public Works came to our aid immediately with a backhoe and dump truck to remove them. Sexton Pete Lammert and Susan Devlin watched anxiously but luckily no bones were uncovered. The installation of the fence and gate was finished in the pouring rain. During the excavation, five footings from the original iron fence were found under boulders with two small pieces of the original fence. The footings were auctioned off. Frank Devlin and Galo Hernandez installed the three new signs just a few days before the dedication.

Susan Devlin, President of the Thomaston Historical Society, kicked off the ceremony on July 23<sup>rd</sup> by thanking the many individuals and organizations who donated to this project and introduced some of the skilled experts who helped implement the project. The two largest donors were honored by the special role that they played in the ceremony. Mary Kay Felton, Regent of the Lady Knox Chapter of the DAR, was the master of the ceremony for the placing of wreaths by 14 organizations. Warren “Renny” Little, Chair of the Grants and Education Committee of The Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, gave a talk about Knox which was enjoyed by all. The ceremony closed with the retirement of the color guard and a moving rendition of taps by Michael Whitehead.

Susan Devlin and Donna Tokarz  
Knox Gravesite Committee

## ***Voices from the American Revolution – May Cemetery Tour***

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On May 14th, the Lady Knox Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Thomaston Historical Society jointly gave the public a chance to hear the stories of 15 Revolutionary War veterans.

We met Mason Wheaton, a Colonel of the 4th Lincoln County Regiment of Massachusetts, who later was, and at different times, a Thomaston Selectman, Assessor, Town Treasurer, Sealer of Weights and Measures, Justice of the Peace, Coroner, and Retailer. In addition, he served in the House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts. He encouraged another veteran, William Southward, to come to



Thomaston which was bustling with many job opportunities. Southward had a blacksmith shop south of Mill creek. He was later known as the “eccentric old blacksmith”. We also met Sgt. Daniel Morse, one of the signers of the Thomaston Incorporation papers in 1777. He was a wheelwright, and was appointed “culler of staves” at the first town meeting. (Staves were heavily regulated as they were used as payment for taxes.) These are just samples of the tidbits that hosts at each grave site, attired in period dress, provided with short personal biographies of each veteran.

Historian Peggy McCrea, began the program by giving background information about the cemetery and maps of the grave sites. The tour ended at Major General Henry Knox’s grave where it was announced that the restoration of this famous patriot’s grave site would be completed in time for a dedication on July 23rd. The picture here shows the hosts from the gravesites together in front of Knox’s grave.

Peggy McCrea and Susan Devlin  
Event Coordinators

## ***Historical Society Wants YOU!***

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We're enlisting all veterans and their affiliates to help honor our veterans of all wars next year. For Thomaston's 4th of July Parade, our aim is to honor our home town heroes by displaying their service through uniforms, vehicles and patriotic colors. We want to work with any Veteran Organizations and anyone involved with Reenactment in the community to make next year's parade a real tribute to our servicemen and women.

With the success of our profile of World War II veterans last year, we have been urged and want to continue interviewing those veterans or families of fallen veterans that served in later wars. We are making a list of Korean and Viet Nam veterans who are willing to be included. If you know of someone to add to our list or the descendants of a patriot who died in one of these conflicts, please let us know. We will be having a reception for veterans in September.

Enlist to help today through email at [info@ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com](mailto:info@ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com) or by leaving a message on the museum phone, (207) 354-2295.

Susan Devlin and Desiree Genthner  
Curators



## ***New Donations Expand Our Knowledge and Raise New Questions***

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One important recent addition to our collection of Thomaston historic artifacts expands our knowledge of 35 Knox Street. It was the largest home in town when built by Samuel Watts. Most know it as the Davis Funeral Home, which it became after the death of Mary Jane Watts, and before it returned to the private residence it is now. Thanks to Linda Moss, we have received many interesting items that give us a snap shot of Mary Jane Watts’s life and the life of the Davis Funeral Home and its owners. Roy and Linda Moss took over the funeral home after the death of Russell Moss. The collection includes Mary Jane’s parasols, photos and remembrances from her life, advertising handouts for the funeral Home, and a personal accounting of the tragic drowning of Russell Moss.

Other recent additions to our collection include the following:

- Photo of Lottie Adelia Smith, born 1894 (from Wayne Curtis) and of Edith Welt (from Ida Elliot Clarke)

- 1970's poster of annual Fireman's Carnival - from Donna Tokarz
- Early documents related to original Wadsworth Street toll bridge – purchased through eBay
- Photos of building of Hartford Cook's boat in 1948 by Russ & Tab Tabbutt – from Sally Tabbutt Ploski
- Vinal Dairy wooden crate – from Karen & George Cabot
- Pictures of an earlier Prison graveyard with list of those buried – from Brenda Peaboddy
- Hitler's Civilian Army arm band - from Carmine Percorelli to expand our WW II message
- New England Must Not Be Trampled On : The Tragic Death of Jonathan Cilley, new book by Roger Ginn (donor) which notes important contributions about this native son from Eve Anderson's earlier book and the Cilley family letters housed at our museum
- 1882 price list for goods manufactured by Maine State Prison – from Joline Webber

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.

Susan Devlin  
President and Curator

## ***Meet Bill Gay – New Historical Society Board Member***

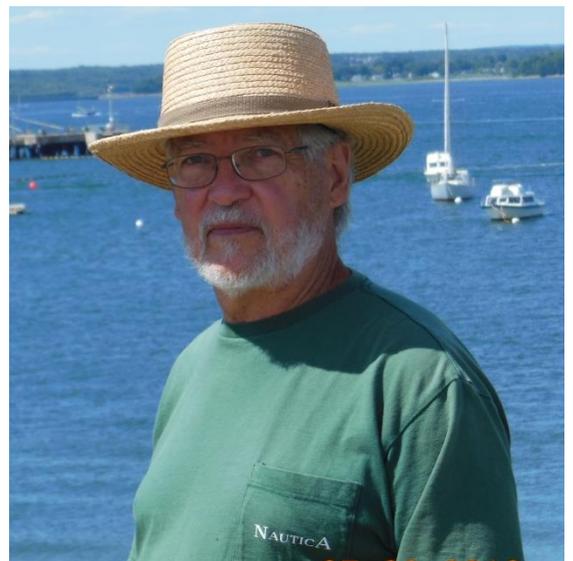
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Bill was born at home on Brewster Street in Rockland. In the early 1940s, his family purchased a George Washburn built house at 28 Knox Street (old numbering system). It is the house on the west side with the triangle attic window just across from Fluker St. The house's history and his family are written up in F.L. Morse's Thomaston Scrapbook. He started school at the old Green Street School, but never got his tongue stuck (frozen) in the winter on the railing of the metal fence that surrounded the school as some students were teased into doing.

During the third grade, his family moved to Maryland while retaining the house on Knox St. The family returned every summer at the end of each school year to enjoy the cool Maine summers and returned south at the start of the school year.

When it came time to enter high school, his family returned to their Knox Street home and Bill entered Thomaston High School (now known by its earlier name as Thomaston Academy). He was active in many school activities and was particularly successful as a cross country and track runner. He graduated in the same class of 26 as our recent Board Member Sandra (Stetson) Overlock. His sister Betsy Feyler has been a long time Thomaston resident and now lives on Fluker Street.

After high school, Bill left the state to attend college but returned every summer for his summer job as one of the cooks at the Island Inn on Monhegan Island. During his working career he lived in various countries and states as he pursued work in several industries, returning to Thomaston many summers to participate in the July 4th celebrations and visit family. While working in New York City he became a member of the SR (Sons of the Revolution) based on an ancestor Stephen Pullen from Winthrop, Maine. He has been reviewing



books pertaining to the American Revolution for their annual Book Award Committee for over 20 years. Bill later became a member of the SAR (Sons of the American Revolution) while living in Pennsylvania.

Bill and his wife Bobbi now live full time in Owls Head in a home they purchased over 30 years ago. However, he has always considered Thomaston as his home town and he looks forward to working with the Thomaston Historical Society and enjoying studying its amazing collection of Thomaston memorabilia.

## ***Holidays Are Coming – 20% Off at Museum Store***

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Please stop by the museum on any Tuesday afternoon, between 2-4 P.M. this holiday season and see what we have in our little shop area 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 is already packaged in boxes ready for gift giving. The ornament 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

## ***2017 Programs***

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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.

**Sun. April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2 pm.** Join us for a Victorian Tea and the opening of a new clothing and accessories exhibit. Seating will be limited so get your tickets early.

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

**Tues. June 13th – Wadsworth Street Bridge – Then and Now.** Historian Peggy McCrea will 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 - TBD**

**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.

**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

## ***Volunteer and Learn About Thomaston History***

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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 your support and for the energy and enthusiasm you 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, exhibits, and events such as our Home for the Holidays open house.

Having said that, it takes time and effort to reach our goals each year. We are an all-volunteer organization that depends on good will and talent in our community to carry out our tasks. Please join one of our volunteer teams. If you are artistically inclined, help make our posters for events or write news releases. Join with an experienced partner to be a host at the museum during open hours or be a sitter at one of our house tours. Help plan and repair new exhibits. Cataloging the museum artifacts is a labor of love and I hope that you can be available to volunteer at times for these ongoing tasks at the museum.

If you are not a member yet, here are two ways that you can join or renew your membership for this fiscal year, July 2016 to June 2017. 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](mailto:membership@ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com). We depend on you...

Ursula Kruse-Vaucienne  
Membership Chair