

# Thomaston Historical Society

Spring Newsletter No. 44 - June 2016 to November 2016

With the arrival of spring we are finishing plans for a busy summer of activities: new programs, special events, the restoration of General Knox's grave site and finalizing plans for major work on repairing the Farmhouse foundation. We are also continuing our long term task of cataloging our collection.

We look forward to seeing you at some of these events and to hear how you might like to help us make the Thomaston Historical Society serve our community even better.



## 2016 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.

**Tues. May 10th - A Walk Down Wadsworth Street.** Historian Peggy McCrea presents the second of an annual series of programs featuring a particular street. She shows photographs of its earliest houses and businesses and explains how the street developed over time. She provides insights into the early families, what they did and how they influenced life in town

**Sat. May 14th - Gravesite visit with Revolutionary War Heroes.** 10 A.M and 11 A.M. Costumed guides will tell stories at the grave sites of 15 revolutionary war veterans in the Thomaston Cemetery. This program is held jointly with the DAR and tail-gate refreshments will be available.

**Tues. June 14th - Preservation - Caretaker Do's and Don'ts.** Auctioneer and appraiser, John Bottero, will appraise items from the audience following his talk.

**Sat. July 9th - Fourth Annual Summer House Tour,** featuring the beautiful Victorian house at 30 Main St. Mall, from 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. Includes basket raffle and refreshments.

**Sat. July 23th - General Henry Knox Memorial Service and Dedication of Grave Site Restoration.** This 10:30 A.M. service honors Revolutionary War General Henry Knox, who was also the first Secretary of War. Following the service is a reception on the grounds of the Knox Museum.

**Tues. Aug. 9th - Indian Wars.** Author Mike Dekker will talk about the critical role the Thomaston region played in the French and Indian Wars in Maine.

**Tues. Sept. 13th - Evolution of Thomaston Boatbuilding in 20th Century.** Stories from a panel of members of multigenerational boat building families.

**Tues. Oct. 11th - Living on a Windjammer.** Anne Mahle, writer, author, captain, cook, and steward, talks about cooking and living aboard with family and guests.

**Mon. Sept. 26th -- Tour of Lyman Morse Boatbuilding Co.** A tour of the facilities and projects at their Thomaston water- front yard will start at 10 A.M. and 1 P.M. As space is limited, reservations will be required. This is part of our 2016 focus of 20th Century boat builders.

**Fri./Sat. Dec. 9-10 - Home for the Holidays House Tour.** The majestic house at 225 Main Street will be featured, with a Friday reception from 6 to 8 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 4 P.M. Reservations are needed for the Friday night event and tickets may be purchased at the door on Saturday.

The tour of Thomaston Churches to honor the 200th anniversary of the Baptist Church has been delayed because of the Route 1 road work which will likely make access a problem.

## ***Gen. Henry Knox Gravesite Restoration and Dedication***

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Thanks to cooperation from many organizations and individuals, we have the money to complete the gravesite restoration this summer. This conservation /restoration project includes cleaning and repairing the monument and side stones finished last fall. An iron fence in the spirit of the original one is being made for installation in early July. The project also includes adding a sign at the road to explain who Knox was, name the large sponsors, and direct visitors. A new sign at the gravesite was made for us by the Maine State Prison along with an arrow to turn visitors toward the grave on Avenue 1. We still need funding for the finials on the fence posts to complete the restoration project.



This has been a strong, cross-organizational effort. One example includes one of our earliest and largest contributors, the Society of the Cincinnati of Massachusetts, thanks to Reny Little. They also encouraged the national organization to give a significant donation in honor of Knox, a founder of the society. Connor Homes donated Alex Hernandez's time to do the engineering drawing required for the new fencing. The town's public works department is going to do the sign installation for us.

Other major donors include Maine Masonic Charitable Foundation, thanks to help from Ron Gamage, the Maine State Society - Sons of the American Revolution, Maine DAR, and many more. Just recently, we won a matching grant from the National Society - the Daughters of the American Revolution. This largest of our donations covered the final money needed for the fence. The Lady Knox Chapter of the DAR has given strong support, not only in sponsoring our national grant application, but in encouraging the state chapter support, and helping us design the signage.



Join us on July 23<sup>rd</sup> at the grave site to celebrate this restoration and thank our many donors who will be represented.

Susan Devlin and Donna Tokarz  
Knox Gravesite Committee

## ***Warning Out and the Poor House in Thomaston***

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*Warning out* strangers was a practice originating in suspected cases of pauperism, which became general throughout the Commonwealth toward any and all newcomers without discrimination. The action was first taken here in Thomaston in 1785 when residents became fearful of indigents moving into town, anticipating support from taxpayers. Local families had marginal earnings and would be hard put to share their meager existence with others. The basic intent was to encourage potential homesteaders to have employment and means to sustain themselves before moving to the area. The practice was discontinued about 1788 but renewed again in 1792, when there was a new threat of being overburdened by outsiders without a means of support. It afterwards

proved that many of the town's most valuable and thrifty citizens were treated in this manner...including Rev War soldiers David Jenks, Phinehas Butler and John Tings, and Ebenezer Thompson.

Eventually the practice was replaced by the concept of a Poor House. Prior to the construction of the Poor House, local paupers were boarded out with neighbors. In 1836, land was bought from the Dr. Dodge estate on Meadow Road in what is now Rockland, and a two-story house was erected as an alms house, or house of correction. This building housed the needy from early Thomaston – including South Thomaston and Rockland - until the town was divided and the building was sold. The poor



of Thomaston were again boarded out at the discretion of the selectmen until 1862, when the selectmen built a large house with outbuildings for operation as the Poor or Town Farm on Erin Street. The complex contained a barn, stable and several farm outbuildings. The town hearse, drawn by a horse from the Poor Farm stable, was kept in one of the smaller buildings.

For years, the Poor House sheltered those who, because of physical infirmities or mental defects, were unable to support themselves. Children grew up in the place where lived sick folks, idiots, drunks, and sometimes unfortunate persons neither decent nor in any way fit to be with children. By 1969 other means were in place to assist the needy at which time the buildings were removed and the cellar filled in and graded for cemetery extension. The house stood about where the Leighton monument is now situated in the Village Cemetery.

Margaret McCrea  
Historian

## *News about Our Museum*

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With the success of our profile of World War II veterans last year, there has been demand for us to continue -- interviewing Korean War and Viet Nam vets. We are making a list of those 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 also have two new exhibits we are working on. We are expanding and refining our 20<sup>th</sup> Century Boat builders – as a special theme for this year. We also want to do a clothing and accessories exhibit. Finally, keep on the lookout for new displays in our satellite collection at the library.

Work continues as we document our collection on the PastPerfect museum management software and as we do this, 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 will take a long time. We desperately need volunteers.

We have received some wonderful additions to our collection recently, including the following:

- Items from the Ruggles Auction, including two pieces of furniture, china, children's clothing, a morning dress and more - from Dave and Cindy Bowman
- Bricks from the Georges Hotel found during excavation for the new sewers
- Tray from Ivy Dodd's estate - from Nancy Smith
- Framed collage picturing Maine State Prison Workshop projects - from Alan Young and John Upham

- Photos of Ro Ann, built in 1947 at Newbert and Wallace - from Kay Sylvester
- Fire Department photos ( circa 1947) and church photos (1870-1896) - from John Upham
- Two 1910 Thomaston Brick Co. Preferred Stock Certificates - from Carol & David Hoskins
- 1923 Maine Register: State Year Book and Legislative Manuel - from Thomaston Public Library
- Exchange/return of items related to Thomaston from other institutions -- Waldoborough Historical Society, Union Historical Society, and Prince Memorial Library

## ***Fourth Annual Summer House Tour***

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We are pleased to announce that our 4th annual Summer House Tour will feature the lovely Victorian home of Neal and Sheilagh Guyer, located at 30 Main Street Mall, just off Route 1.

This year the Summer House Tour will take place on Saturday, July 9 from 1-4 P.M. Room docents will share the history of the house and we hope to provide information on its restoration and renovations as well.

You've heard the phrase "Location is everything" and it certainly is this year as Route 1 in Thomaston will be undergoing road work. The Guyers' home is visible from Route 1 but is accessible from the corner of Route 1 and School Street. Their house is the first on the left on Main Street Mall from the School Street end of Route 1. Parking is available along School Street and Main Street Mall.



Tickets for this event will be available at the door.

Members: \$5; non-members: \$8. Light refreshments are available with ticket purchase and raffle baskets tickets will also be available. Rain date is Sunday, July 10.

We will need lots of extra help that day for room sitters and also for basket donations for our raffle. These baskets can contain any assortment of items such as books, greeting cards, gift certificates to local businesses, ornaments, handmade items, candles, dinner invitations, etc. The contents can be as varied as your imagination can take you. Please call Mimi Zwick at 354-7029 or contact her by e-mail at [mzwick@myfairpoint.net](mailto:mzwick@myfairpoint.net) to volunteer or to make a donation for our raffle.

Mimi Zwick  
Historic Houses Chairperson

## ***Farmhouse Restoration Imperative!***

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Based on the CAP grant evaluation of our nearly 220 year- old building, we know we have major moisture issues due not only to the building's age and construction, but also to the "bowl" the building sits on. This must be addressed to protect the building and our collections. One of the challenges is that we only own the foot print of the building which sits in the middle of Maine DOT land.

Recently we contracted with the engineering firm Gartley & Dorsky to create a detailed plan to trap and remove ground water from around the perimeter of the Thomaston Historical Society building, aka "the Farmhouse." Their survey and preliminary plan is complete. This evaluation uncovered that our elevation is such that we will need a pump to get water to the storm sewer. Also, the problem is not just the old building but that moisture is coming up through the slab of the addition which contains our archives.

Gartley & Dorsky will also gain necessary agreements with the Maine DOT and the town of Thomaston for the work required. The final plan and hopefully approval should be completed in May. Then the task of writing grants to raise the money will begin. Our possible optimistic wish is to do the major structural work in early fall after the museum's primary season is over, if the money can be raised quickly.

Bill Eberle and Susan Devlin  
Restoration Planning

## ***Meet Eve Anderson - Historical Society President Emeritus***

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When Eve and Olof Anderson moved to Maine in 1990, 25+ years ago, they enthusiastically adopted Thomaston as their home. Eve's energy and love of history allowed her to help our community in many ways.

What we know Eve best for is her contributions to the Thomaston Historical Society. As president from 1996 to 2002, Eve introduced new energy at a critical transition with the retirement of many of the old guard. She launched Museum in the Streets and she negotiated with the Maine DOT so that we at least own the land on which the Farmhouse Museum stands. Eve and Olof planned the



ell addition on the old foundation of the building. This allowed us to have one of the few temperature and humidity controlled archival storage rooms in a small town museum, and it enabled us to expand our display areas. Among the many other contributions of the Andersons is the acquisition of the Cilley/Prince archive of letters. Eve transcribed and published the letters documenting this important multi-generational Thomaston dynasty. Eve just recently retired as our media chair but has agreed to stay on the board as President Emeritus.

Eve's contributions to Thomaston are not limited to the Historical Society. Eve was also a member of the Friends of Montpelier Board and the Watts Hall management committee for many years.

## ***Museum Store -- 20% Off Sale All Summer***

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Please stop by the museum this summer and see what we have in our little shop area.

Our Barnabus Webb gold-plated brass ship ornaments are in boxes ready for gift giving or souvenirs. This beautiful ornament was designed by our historian and artist, Peggy McCrea, and it would be a wonderful memento for summer visitors to the area as the ship was built in Thomaston. We also have plenty of interesting and informative books, mugs, note cards, T-shirts, lapel pins, and our nostalgic 1878 Thomaston Maps. Remember, members get 10% off all items.

We will be having a 20% sale off most items throughout the summer, so please stop by to see our exhibits and maybe do some shopping!



Aleta Kilborn  
Secretary and Store Manager

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

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The Board is working on the slate of board members and officers for the year 2016-2017. We have our officers and most board members for the slate you will receive at the annual meeting. However, we are in need of a Finance Chair, Building & Grounds Chair and Media Chair.

- Eve Anderson, our Media Chair has to step down because of health issues.
- We have been without a Finance Chair for a year, and this is neither good nor acceptable.
- Rod Grindell, our Building & Grounds Chair and computer tech/set-up person. Since we are in the process of automating our whole collection, handling both jobs is too much.

We must replace these chair persons or find people to fill part of each role. Can you or someone who help?

We can always use people to sit at the museum during our open summer hours. We really prefer and need at least two at the museum when open. I realize summer is a busy time for us all, but if you could even spare a day here and there, it would be wonderful! We are open Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-4pm and Saturdays 1-3pm June through the first week of September. It is a wonderful chance to learn more about our collection and Thomaston's history and to meet interesting visitors.

Finally, we need help in cataloging and repacking our collection. This can include work at the museum or at home with data entry.

Kathleen Daley  
Vice President and Volunteer Chair

## ***Historical Society Membership -- A Joy, A Challenge***

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Being a member of the Historical Society of Thomaston is both a joy and a challenge. A joy because of the rich and far reaching history of Thomaston that the Society is excited to share with its members and the public at large. A challenge because of the effort and devotion it takes to keep that history alive and to be at the forefront of today's events. This requires resources.

Please come and join in the excitement. It's that time of the year again when we are looking for our current members to rejoin the Thomaston Historical Society and for our past members to take another look at the many things the Society has to offer each year. And we are looking for new blood to infuse into our mission.

Dear past, present and potential members, we invite you to join/rejoin us not only because your involvement in our town's historical society can open your eyes to days gone by, but because of the richness of the Society's mission, one that you can believe in. I assume, as it is with me, being a member gives us a sense of community belonging. Oh yes, and there is the tax deduction to consider.

The Thomaston Historical Society is all volunteer based and one of the busiest historical societies in the State of Maine. And why is that? Well, historic preservation includes a broad range of costly work, from building rehabilitation and maintenance to education and program development and basic administrative support. Finding money and other resources for this work will always be a challenge.

We believe that perseverance and ingenuity can lead to success. We further believe that with your support, may that be membership dues or donations of your time, we will continue to grow in fulfilling our mission of preserving the rich history of the Town of Thomaston.

Again, please join us by going to our website: [www.ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com](http://www.ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com) to complete the membership form and use PayPal, or fill out the enclosed form and send it back with a check, or stop by to renew at the Society's Museum when we are open.

Ursula Kruse-Vaucienne  
Membership Chair

**THOMASTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL (7/2016 – 6/2017)**

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](http://www.thomastonhistoricalsociety.com).

Mr.  Mrs.  Ms  M/M First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company/Organization \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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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 4<sup>th</sup> 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.
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Summary of Payment Enclosed:	Membership Dues _____
	Donation _____
	Total _____