

Thomaston Historical Society



New Entrance Exhibit in the Museum

This sleigh has taken an interesting path in its life. It was built in 1899 at the Maine State Prison and owned first by the warden. We don't know its history after that until 1992, when Janice and Lawrence Morse bought it from Ye Olde Tyler Merchant House in Haddam, CT to display Janice's doll and stuffed bear collection. After two years of restoration it now looks like above. When Janice died last winter, Lawrence wanted to find a new home where it would be loved and kept indoors to preserve the restoration. He offered to bring it home to Thomaston if we would use it in the museum. It is now the first thing you seen as you enter.

It also provides an introduction to our mini-Prison museum on the second floor that we were asked to host when the prison closed in 2002.

Susan Devlin, President and Curator

Graduation Photos Featured in Municipal Building Gallery Display

Our summer display at our satellite gallery in the long hall of the Municipal Building shows old Thomaston High School graduation photos. Some visitors are surprised by their picture or that of a parent or grandparent. Take a look – as this will change soon.

We plan to put up another display of veterans in November as it was so popular last year. Other plans include a “Then and Now” view of downtown businesses.

Genealogy Requests Pouring in

In August/September alone we received requests to help trace down stories on five families with Thomaston: Edward O’Brien, Thomas, Barnabus Webb, and Starrett. The photo of the painting to the right is of Edward O’Brien, which hangs in our museum.

These requests came from all over the country – as far as Oregon. Digging can be fun, we uncovered stories that we had not yet heard. Let us know if you would like to help.

Susan Devlin



David Wotton’s “Adopted Family” Visits

David Wotton enlisted in the Army during his Senior Year at Thomaston High School in March 1943. He was killed in action in Belgium on February 15, 1945 at the age of 20 and is buried in the Henri-Capelle American Cemetery there.

Robbe and Franky Meers of Bilzen, Belgium adopted his grave and care for it, as part of a program coordinated with the American Battle Monuments Commission. On Friday, July 15, Robbe, Franky and Crystal Meers visited Thomaston to get to know David even better.

With only a few days notice, we traced down the former Wotton house on Beechwood Street where David was raised and found the grave of his parents, Raymond and Rena Wotton, and siblings in the Thomaston Village Cemetery. David’s parents added his name to the monument to make sure he was remembered here as well as in Belgium. These were featured in the tour Susan Devlin arranged for their visit. In addition, as a surprise for the Meers, she traced down David’s remaining relative in the area, cousin Margaret Gagnon of Friendship. She joined the group for the “tour” and showed the Meers a box of David belongings that his mother had given her to keep. These are now at the historical society museum.

As a thank you, the Meers gave us small cross with David’s information, which is now in our new David Wotton display.

Susan Devlin



WE HELP EACH OTHER!

Nearly all the communities in Knox County have their individual historical societies. Frequently items are donated to them or found in their material which pertains to other Town societies than their own. Often these are forwarded to the proper Town as this email we recently received from the Warren Historical Society illustrates:

Dear Thomaston Historical Society,

The Warren Historical Society has 4 volumes of undertaker ledgers that belonged to Harold Sawyer who had a funeral/undertaker business in Warren. I have been transcribing these notebooks and have discovered volume II mostly consisted of Thomaston residents who died and were buried in Thomaston cemeteries. These entries are interesting as Harold Sawyer made note of parent's names of the deceased, husband names or wife names, where they were born and cause of death with doctor names.

Included are all the burials in Thomaston for all 4 Volumes. This transcription would be a good addition to your cemetery records. Most were buried in the Village Cemetery or the St. James Catholic Church cemetery. Not knowing how many cemeteries Thomaston has, you should check/add names of cemeteries to the entries. Some cemeteries are in South Thomaston. The deaths are from the 1920's and 1930's.

I hope you enjoy this document of undertaker notes by Mr. Sawyer. He may have been the local undertaker for the area as some Towns didn't have an undertaker. Attached is the word document to this email.

Sincerely, Karin Larson, Warren Historical Society Historian.

The transcripts provided will be a treasure trove for genealogists.

Bill Gay – Vice President

Last Event of 2022 - November 1st

We are finishing the year with a focus on Veterans before launching a new veterans display in the town municipal building.

Tues. Aug. 9 – Thomaston Patriots – Some Special Stories. Susan Devlin and Sandy Moore have chosen veterans or fallen patriots from five wars to feature in this special presentation.

Hopefully next year we will be able to return to a full agenda and once again have a Home for the Holidays gala and summer house tour.

Have Some Fun and Help Us Now

We have a lot of projects on the waiting list that you might enjoy helping us do. Here are a few. Contact our curator, Susan Devlin, if you want to learn more (devlin.susan@yahoo.com).

Dr. Everett Hodgkins Medical Display – We want to tell the story of medical practices in the 1920s and 1930s, using a donation of medical equipment and records from Dr. Hodgkin's family. He died in 1944. Do you know a retired doctor who might be able to tell us what we have, what to keep and what to recycle? Would you like to help us tell this story in a display case we are holding for this.

From Quarry to Lime - We have accumulated a lot of pictures and equipment for processing lime, thanks mostly to Dragon Cement. It is now time to take this from a display of objects to a story. Would you like to take photos of the items and visit with folks at Dragon to determine what that story will be in our museum? We have a new display area for this exhibit.

Main St. Businesses Then and Now - We hope the winter display in the Town Office Satellite Gallery will tell the stories of businesses in the past and what businesses are in those spaces today. This requires searching through old pictures, writing a short summary of that business and talking to the current business owners in the same space.

Publicity – We have been functioning without a dedicated publicity person to help write news releases and help with newsletters. Our President has carried this load along with too many other functions for too long. It is not too big a job and would benefit from a dedicated, creative writer to focus on this.

Building and Grounds Chair – Don't get scared, this does not mean, cleaning, mowing and painting, but learning/tracking what needs to be done and finding the contractors or volunteers needed. A retired contractor would be an asset.

Have you renewed your membership for 2022-2023 yet? Do you know a business who would like to support the historical society and gain some publicity?

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