

Thomaston Historical Society

Fall Newsletter No. 51 – October 2019



New Archival Library and Gallery

The major restoration work on our Knox Farmhouse Museum is done. We were open as usual this summer, though we were completing the transformation of the former archival storage room on the first floor to our new Archival Gallery and Library. Available now are about 600 books and journals, about 80 boxes of photographs, and four walls of framed paintings, prints and signs long in storage. If you could not come to our reception on October 5th, please stop by to see this beautiful setting.

In addition to our 2019 lecture series and Knox Memorial Service, we offered a tour of Thomas Place Auction House, our 4th business tour, our first cemetery cleaning workday as a follow-up from last year's training workshop, and our 2nd Salute to Veterans reception. Plans celebrating Maine's Bicentennial are underway with a cross-organizational committee, chaired by the Historical Society.

Only because of a dedicated board, strong Town support, partnering with other organizations, and many volunteer members, can we continue to offer these many events to celebrate and maintain Thomaston's history. You can learn more about some of these projects in this newsletter. Also visit our website and Facebook page.

Susan Devlin
President, Thomaston Historical Society

13th Home for the Holidays Gala and House Tour December 6th & 7th

December 6 and 7 marks our Lucky 13th anniversary for *Home for the Holidays*! This year's home for our annual gala and house tour is the Captain William Henderson House, owned by Patti Nilsen and is located at 239 Main Street in Thomaston.

The house was built for Captain Henderson and his wife, Susan Amelia Jordan, a daughter of Captain Oliver Jordan, a highly successful sea captain and Thomaston merchant. The Henderson House is an outstanding Greek Revival treasure that borders Main Street in historic Thomaston, Maine.

Specifically mentioned on the National Register of Historic Places, the architectural elements embody the classic details of the style: gable end to the street, two-story pilasters on the corners, broad architrave trim around the evenly spaced windows (including a blank window to achieve symmetry of design), and a wide band of trim below a heavy cornice just below the roof line. The wall imitates flat stonework such as is found in Greek temples. The side entry with entablature is supported by a beautifully proportioned, free-standing fluted ionic column.

Please join us to tour this beautiful example of Thomaston's lovely homes, built by one of the captains who chose to live in the *Town that Went to Sea*. Friday, December 6th from 5-7 pm will feature the annual wine reception as well as our Live and Silent Auctions. Tickets are \$20 for members and \$24 for non-members. On Saturday, December 7, the house will be open for tours and our Silent Auction continues between 10:00 am and 3 PM. Saturday tickets are \$10 for members and \$12 for non-members. Friday night tickets are good for both Friday and Saturday for those who wish to check their favorite Silent Auction items. Please contact Mimi Zwick for tickets at 354-7029.

Mimi Zwick, Chair of House Tours

2nd Salute to Veterans - September 28th

The tents went up, the chairs were set out, and flags were everywhere flying high and low. Everything was in place. Then the Veterans, family and friends started arriving; about 150 people attended the 3 hour event at Thomaston's *American Legion, Post 37* on Saturday afternoon, September 28th.

Girl Scout Troop 1831, with leader Dawn Gauthier from St. George, included girls from Rockland and Washington, a very active troop working on higher awards, community service, and preparing for their trip to Orlando in October 2020, attended the event greeting people, seating Veterans, helping with food and anything that had to be done.

As Girl Scout, Mariah, sang the National Anthem surrounded by other Girl Scouts, the American Legion Color Guard from Thomaston and St George



walked the flags through the crowd and posted the flags in front. The Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer were delivered and the event was started.



David Hassen, a Veteran, spoke on Veteran homelessness. David had a tremendous, detailed display set up in the Legion Hall. George Robinson, Jr spoke on the 100th anniversary of the Williams-Brazier, American Legion – Post 37. The emotional “Toast to the Flag” was recited by Ron Gamage, *“Here’s to the whole of it. Stars, stripes and pole of it.”* House in the Woods, located in Lee, Maine had a representative, Bob Delancey, who explained the history and purpose of the organization, a military retreat offering outdoor programs to bring together small groups of active military and veterans.

The last speaker, JoAnn Bolduc of Central Maine District Coordinator of Quilts of Valor, presented 9 quilts to deserving Veterans. The healing quilts are hand made by volunteers and personalized for each Veteran.

The outdoor portion of the event ended with the American Legion color guard closing the ceremony by retiring the colors.

Smiles and hugs became the theme as everyone moved indoors to get away from an increasingly fierce wind and to eat the hamburgers, hot dogs, potato salad, beans and chips donated by area businesses.

The cross-organizational “Salute to Veterans” committee is chaired by Sandy Moore of the *Thomaston* Historical Society. Also included are the Orient #15 Lodge of Masons represented by Ron Gamage, the Lady Knox Chapter of the DAR represented by Joanne Richards and American Legion Post 37 represented by Commander William Demmons.

We “Paid tribute to all military personnel, from every service branch, and every time period in American History.” Please visit the Thomaston Historical Society face book page for pictures.



Sandy Moore, Veterans Chair

14 Monuments Cleaned in our First Cemetery Work Day

Several of us put to work what we learned in last year’s cemetery workshop on September 21st. We were joined by some new volunteers. During 4 hours we cleaned 14 stones. Combining this with last summer’s 27 stones we have now cleaned and repaired 51 stones. The pictures below show before and after examples from the 2018 workshop.



Currently we are documenting the work done as recommended. This includes identifying the location of each stone using the database initiated in the past by Shirley and Greg Hamlin. This exercise uncovered that this database has not been kept up to date. We are advocating for this now as this is a resource frequently referenced for visitors who are doing genealogical research.

We hope to keep this momentum going with a fall and spring work day each year – weather permitting. If you want to join this team and learn the Dos and Don'ts of stone maintenance, contact Susan Devlin (info@ThomastonHistoricalSociety.com) for more information.

New Archival Gallery & Library Now Open

Thanks to bookcases being built by Maine State Prison and gallery hanging wire from Brooks Trap Mill, one of our gold business members, we have finished converting the first floor room in the ell to a public gallery and library. Also key to this effort is the work by Kyle Barter for organizing and cataloging nearly 600 books and journals, by Frank Devlin for painting the room and by Frank and Darrell Larabee for hanging the lobster wire.

The new cases about waist high around three sides of the room provide easy access to all our books, journals and maps. Hanging above on lobster wire on all four sides are oil paintings, framed documents and prints and old business signs. The large work table will make meetings and research easy. Our long term dream is to add a computer and large screen with computerized storage/access to ship, house and veteran records.

About 40 came to our official opening of the room on Saturday, October 5th.

Susan Devlin – Curator

New Prison Finds

Our outside “Retired History” exhibit has grown. The newest additions are five stones which formed the marquee of the last main building of the Maine State Prison in Thomaston. It was built in 1924 after the 1923 fire. They arrived from the Prison Farm this summer.



Jeff Dinse donated a pot belly stove, originally in the guard room of an earlier prison building, as documented in an 1870 picture in the book Tall Ships, White Houses and Elms. It is now featured in our new Archival Gallery and Library as seen on the first page of this newsletter.

Finally, we added a switch tower to open cells and a red phone from the old warden's room in our small Prison museum area, thanks to Guy and Kyle Barter.



Susan Devlin, Curator

Other New Additions to the Museum

Below is a sample of items donated to the museum during 2019:

- A pallet of items arrived this summer with items from the Fred Pease family, including as examples, embroidered maps, framed Victorian Valentine's Day cards, wonderful drawings by Fred Pease, walking sticks, bean pots, ladies gloves and other items. Fred Pease is a descendant of the Furbish daughter pictured in the center of the large painting on the cover of this newsletter – from Charlene Bloedon, descendant of Fred Pease
 - Capt. T. G. Libby's Log Book (1881-1897) covering voyages on ships Edward O'Brien, Gen. Knox and Baron Brothers which were all built in Thomaston - from Michael V. Silvia
 - Mementos from the Tabbutt family – from Shirley Tabbutt Richards
 - Woodcock and Sukeforth family bibles, several reports of the Adjunct General of the State of Maine (1866-1818) - from Rod Grindell
 - Photographs, family records, and Dragon mementos - from Beniah Harding's estate
 - Oil portraits of the Hon. Edward and Nancy Fales Robinson – on loan from Fredrick Robinson
 - Local receipts/bills from Capt. Harthorn and John Olson (late 1800s) – from Jean Brooks
 - 1880s Knight Templar Hat (branch of the Masons) – from John Miller
 - Thomaston High School graduation certificates, photos and records – from Scott Ciampa, Mike Mayo, Diana Overlock Sewell and the Town of Thomaston
 - Copies of "Cabin Boy" written by Thomaston native Averyl Reed for use in school projects – from Virginia Olson
 - Book "Maine at War: Volume I" (about the Civil War) – from author Brian Swartz
- ... and much more.

Thomaston Maine 200 Celebrations – Plans So Far

On March 25, 1820, Maine became a state, splitting off from Massachusetts. We initiated a Thomaston cross-organizational committee to plan activities to celebrate the 200th anniversary focusing on Thomaston's accomplishments over the last 200 years. The committee includes representatives from the Historical Society, the Knox Museum, Lady Knox DAR Chapter, American Legion, Mason Lodge, Thomaston Churches, Watts Hall Community Players and the schools. So far we have firm commitments for the following activities:

- Town dinner on March 14th at the American Legion
- New sign on the waterfront celebrating our Shipbuilding heritage and a booklet and traveling exhibit, thanks to a Maine Bicentennial Grant just rewarded to the Historical Society.
- Maine 200 theme for the July 4th parade
- New Henry Knox musical at Watts Hall and possibly a play by former Thomaston resident, Rita Smith
- Knox Museum's expansion of July Knox Day Celebration to include a Revolutionary War encampment.
- August encampment weekend to remember other wars and a ceremony to give out Quilts of Valor.
- Planting a grove of White Pines to commemorate and remember this Maine Milestone

And there are more ideas still in the planning stages. Let us know if you have ideas or want to help.

Susan Devlin and Sandy Moore, committee members

New Volunteers and Their Projects

Kyle Barter was raised in Thomaston, graduating in the last class at Georges Valley High School. After finishing cataloging all our books and journals, Kyle has taken on a new project: making a list of the boats/ships built in Thomaston, organized by builder, including some basic information about each vessel and a pointer to additional information we may have stored. This will be a great reference to have as info about ships is a common request that takes a lot of digging currently. It is also key to the Maine 200 Shipbuilding project.

Anna Kavalec moved to Thomaston from Livermore, CA in 2018 along with many in her family – including a delightful grandson, Sam, who is already into history at the age of five, especially the Civil War. We are leveraging Anna’s love of genealogy to add another reference resource to the library. She is working on compiling in one place a genealogy list of past residents of Thomaston, by family name with some basic information and pointers to other resources we have. This idea was borrowed from Union Historical Society and will also help expedite many genealogical requests. Anna has also helped respond to inquiries.

Jim Beaudry was raised in Thomaston in a house at the corner of Hyler and Knox. After graduating from Georges Valley High School in 1971, he joined the Navy. Later he worked in other states before returning to Maine in 2018. Jim is taking over managing the Museum Store, looking at more ways to market what we offer. He also will be organizing and cataloging the photographs we have. We are lucky to be able to use his managerial experiences and knowledge of Thomaston.



2020 Schedule of Events

Tues. May 12th – Shipbuilding in Early Thomaston. Historian Peggy McCrea will discuss Thomaston’s early shipbuilding days and how nearly every resident in the village was connected to this important and necessary industry that put Thomaston on the map.

Sat. June 20th – Summer House/Garden Tour 1-4 PM. Fee event – More information soon.

Tues. June 16th – The Ingraham Diaries. Eleanor and Peter Richardson will talk about their book on the Ingrahams, a family who experienced Maine becoming a state, Knox becoming a county, and Rockland’s split from Thomaston. The Diaries include cultural, historical, and genealogical information of the times.

Sat. July 25th - General Henry Knox Annual Memorial Service. This 10:30 AM 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. 11th – Appraisal Night. John Bottero returns with his very popular program on the caretaking and appraisal of items brought in from the audience.

Tues. Sept. 8th – Maine’s First Governor – 200 years ago. Zac McDorr, journalist and founder of the Bath History Center, will talk about how Maine became a state with the help of William King, Maine’s first governor.

Tues. Oct. 13th – Wartime Career of Jonathan Cilley. Brian Swartz will talk about the early wartime career of Thomaston attorney, Jonathan Prince Cilley, charter member of the 1st Maine Cavalry Regiment who inspired him to write his book.

September Date TBS – Cemetery Cleaning Work Day. We plan to have our second annual Lean and Clean workday. Some of us who took the 2018 training workshop will help newcomers learn the do’s and don’ts and help us all have fun. If you can’t work, you can help record or make a donation towards the needed supplies.

Fri. & Sat. Dec. 11th-12th – 14th Home for the Holidays. At a historic house to be determined, we 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 continues 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. (Fee event)

Aleta Kilborn, Program Chair

Help Needed -- New H4H Chair and Media Chair!!

The Home for the Holidays Gala and Summer House Tour are increasingly popular and provides a key financial resource to the success of Thomaston Historical Society.

Mimi Zwick has chaired the House Tours for many years – including starting the Summer House Tour. She needs a breather so we are looking for a new chair to take over for 2020 H4H. We already have plans in the works to split the work load. If you are interesting in chairing the committee or taking on a component of one of these events, please approach me to explore ways to help.

I am still our temporary Media Chair, creating news releases, posters and newsletters for three years. We are looking for someone or a couple of people to work together who enjoy writing and/or graphic art to help in this way. The scope includes news releases/posters for about 7 events and two newsletters each year – with many contributors to the content.

There are other options too – helping with new exhibits, organizing and identifying people in picture, and on and on. We have a lot of options to learn more about Thomaston and have some fun – whether you want to work more regularly or just have a few hours to spare.

Susan Devlin, President

Membership Update

Our membership continues to grow. If you are one of our 2018-2019 members that has not yet renewed for the 7//1/2019 - 6/30/2020 year, please think of doing so soon so we can keep the lights on.

On the next page are copies of business cards from our current Gold Business members. Please remember to thank them when you are in their place of business or see them in your travels.

Rod and Cathy Grindell – Membership Committee


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