

Thomaston Historical Society

Fall Newsletter No. 53 – October 2020



Have you noticed the expanding “retired history” exhibit outside the museum? This set of old marquee stones was found at the Prison farm and donated to expand our extensive set of prison artifacts.

Remembering Eve Anderson (1936-2020)

When Eve and Olof Anderson moved to Maine in 1990, they enthusiastically adopted Thomaston and especially 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 was instrumental in launching Museum in the Streets and writing the text of the buildings featured. She successfully negotiated full ownership of the land on which the Farmhouse Museum stands.

Eve and Olof planned the ell addition on the footprint of the part of the building removed earlier. This allows us to have one of the few temperature and humidity controlled archival storage rooms in a small town museum and enabled us to expand our display area. With the recent building renovations, it now houses our new library and gallery on the first floor. The remaining archives are on the second floor – now also a controlled environment – expanding on Eve’s vision.

Among her many other contributions is the acquisition of the Cilley/Prince archive of letters. With Olof’s help, Eve transcribed and published the letters documenting this important multi-generational Thomaston dynasty. Recently found at Eve’s home are some additions to this collection, which our new board member Anna Kalavec is cataloging.

Most important, Eve was a good friend and advisor. She is greatly missed. The Historical Society board is planning a plaque, with Olof and daughter Liz’s approval, to display in the museum.



Susan Devlin
President, Thomaston Historical Society

Museum Remains Closed but Preparing for the Future

While our museum is still is not open to the general public, a visit can be arranged by appointment (364-4121). We have had a few “masked” visitors, some coming with donations. We started Tuesday and Thursday work days again with 3-4 well spaced volunteers. Because so many folks have been spending time at home cleaning house - we have had many interesting things dropped by that need to be cataloged. Also, a number of projects and new exhibits are in the works. Kathy Daley is deep into organizing the 80 plus boxes of pictures we have, preparing to catalog them into Past Perfect.

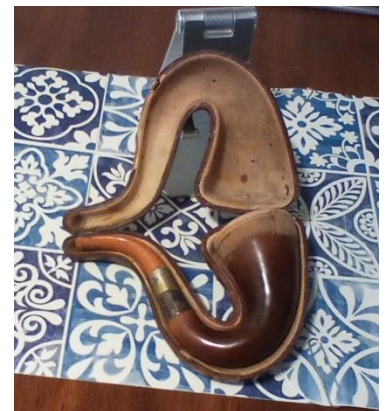
We have also put our annual “Lean and Clean” work session at the cemetery on hold. We are planning some new exhibits, including a detailed view of the findings from the archaeological dig we supported on the Thatcher Street lot near us. More about some special projects later in this newsletter.

Susan Devlin, Curator

A Mystery Pipe

THS was given this beautiful cased pipe by an elderly lady who found it in her mother’s things many years ago. We don’t know the source, when it might have been made and who might have used it. It appears to be made from a horn, and is possibly from the Mosley family. Can anyone help us with this mystery?

Kathy Daley



Looking for Info on the Black & Gay Canning Co.

I am looking for information (old photos, personal stories, general information, etc.) for an article that I would like to write for our Society. Some basic facts known are that the firm was formed Nov. 16, 1911. The partners were Fred C. Black and George Gay. (I am no relation to Mr. Gay.) George Gay died in the influenza epidemic of 1918. His share was bought out by Mr. Black’s brothers, Alfred S. of Rockland and John A. of New York. A little over four years later the entire company came under the sole ownership of Fred C.

An interesting side note is that the company was started on the wharf of J.O. Cushing & Co. in Thomaston. (A firm highlighted in an article in our Spring 2018 Newsletter regarding a merchant token discovered in our archives.) Later Black & Gay took over the site of the original Montpelier Mansion next to the railroad track. Expansion included satellite factories in Brooks, Warren, Union and Stonington.

Among the items canned were blueberries, clams, baked beans, brown bread, fresh crab meat, string beans, Crosby white and Golden Bantam corn, apples and squash. Employees generally totaled from 75 to 80 during the clam season (March to June and Sept till the flats froze) and about 50 during blueberry season. Empty clam shells were left in piles outside and I recall going with my dad in the mid 1950’s and filling our trailer with these shells to put in our driveway on Knox Street. They crushed down to a nice solid base.

So you can see I have a start, but would love to hear any anecdotes or other material that might be buried around. Contact THS via email (info@thomastonhistoricalsociety.com) or letter (PO Box 384, Thomaston, ME 04861) to tell us what you might have and how we can contact you.

Bill Gay, Vice President

Gen. Knox Memorial Service – Smaller but Henry was Remembered

Despite our need to avoid large gatherings, we did not skip our annual memorial service to honor Major General Henry Knox. We had a small ceremony, with just invited organizations (at most two representatives) to lay wreaths from the usual local participants.

Brooks Stevens and Susan Devlin represented THS. Some annual visitors, like the Knox Lodge of Boston, arranged for a wreath although they could not make the trip to Maine. Thanks to Rev. Peter Jenks for the innovation, Mike Whitehead | playing taps, and Sexton, Pete Lammert for help with set up.



Brooks Stevens, Knox Day Chair

Sadly, No Home for the Holidays

As October begins, the Home for the Holidays team is usually hard at work. The core group solicits ads for the Program Book, donations for both the Live and Silent auctions, updating our print materials, sending out invitations by email and snail mail and working with the homeowner to prepare another one of Thomaston's beautiful antique homes to be opened to the public. Thanks to COVID-19, we need to postpone this most important fundraiser until it is safe for everyone to participate and attend. We certainly hope that will be next year!

Instead we hope you, our supporters, will consider making a monetary donation to the Thomaston Historical Society to help keep us afloat during this difficult year. Suggestions include donating your ticket cost (\$20 pp) or what you might spend on the Silent and/or Live auctions. We will publish the names of our H4H supports in our spring newsletter. The Thomaston Historical Society thanks you for your support and we wish you and your families a safe, healthy and happy holiday season!

Mimi Zwick

Restoration of Schooner Hindu – On the Hard in Thomaston

On August 11th, the 95 year old Schooner Hindu motored up the St. Georges River to be pulled at Lyman Morse, the first step in its year-long restoration. The Hindu was built in Boothbay in 1925 and has been a charter ship for many years. You can meet Erin, Josh, Finn and Charlie and follow the restoration by visiting the boat at 367 Main Street, across from the Green. You can sign up for monthly stories about Hindu at <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/FrGHuzV/gift>.

Susan Devlin, President



Historic Thomaston Walking Tour via Smart Phones in the Works

We are working on a new walking tour of Thomaston that will be directed via a Smart Phone and include a map, pictures and text – far beyond what is available from the old Museum in the Streets signs. We could not do this without the Maine Historical Society's arranging for free access to the Vamonde software application, Kyle Barter for learning to be our Vamonde expert, and Peggy McCrea for helping expand on the footprint of the tour and content. You will hear more when the tour is up and running. The software is such that we can continue to expand in the future. We hope you will test it out upon launch.

Susan Devlin and Kyle Barter

PLEASE HELP – Renew Your Membership if You Have Not Already

We know that there is much on everyone's mind of great importance, but we hope keeping the Historical Society going is also a concern to you. While many have renewed or joined, many old friends have not. With canceling our three annual fundraising events, we have to tap our reserve to keep the building operational. We need your help.

Good news is we have our first two Legacy Lifetime Members. We also want to thank the Gold Business Members who renewed their support thus far this year.



Sally Tabbutt Ploski, Membership