

Thomaston Historical Society

Fall Newsletter No. 55 – October 2021



Dedication of Shipbuilders Plaque on town landing, August 21st.

With reopening the museum we have had a greater number of visitors than in pre-pandemic years. Donations and research requests continue to be higher than usual also. Some of the latter are the continued impact of house cleaning during the pandemic, but also there are many new people moving to town that want to learn more about their new abode and Thomaston.

Sadly there will not be a Home for the Holidays House Gala and Tour again this December. We can see no way to do the gala safely given our usual attendance and the possible risk imposed on the home owner. This is tough on our bank balance, but it is also disappointing to miss the chance to celebrate with friends.

The summer tour (by appointment) of the Dunn & Elliot Sail Loft was very successful and exciting to see the beautiful conversion of the second floor to a home while retaining the open space. A number of descendants of the Dunn and Elliot families attended.

During the quieter spring and early summer we have been making progress on a number of projects – more about that here.

Susan Devlin
President, Thomaston Historical Society

SAVE THE DATE for Some Christmas Cheer!

Please join us on Sunday, December 12 for a Christmas Open House from 4:00-6:00 PM in Watts Hall. We will enjoy music, photos of past Homes for the Holidays, a Silent Auction and light refreshments. Details will be sent out in November. Hope to see you there!

200 Years of Boatbuilding – Maine 200 Grant Finally Launched

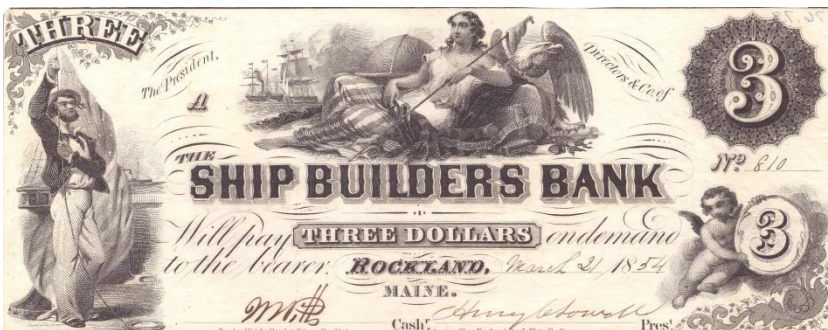
The plaque, featured in the Spring Newsletter, was finally installed on the town landing overlooking the St. Georges River. It was uncovered by author Peggy McCrea and Town Manager Kara George, at the dedication on Saturday, August 21st. Many are picking up their copy of the pamphlet from the box hanging with the plaque, as we have to replenish it frequently.

Town Manager Kara George asked if we would create a satellite THS gallery on the wall in the hallway at the town Municipal Building. Thanks to materials from Brooks Trap Mill and Lowe's and installation help from Public Works, this was set up in July and kicked off with a display of 10 framed posters of major shipbuilders. Feedback has been great. We are getting ready to change the exhibit in October to portraits of veterans, with help from Sandy Moore, chair of the Honoring our Veterans annual event, and Joanne Richards, chair of the Lady Knox Chapter of the DAR.



Susan Devlin

Banknote from the Ship Builders Bank



This banknote from the Ship Builders Bank came to light as we were reworking the files to utilize our newly renovated archival library and gallery. The bank was a Rockland Bank, but the story, the date, and time period make it very interesting. This is basically from Eaton's History of Thomaston, Rockland and South Thomaston.

"The Bank was incorporated in 1853 with a capital of \$100,000: and such was its prestige that its stock was rapidly taken up. Some obscurity has ever rested upon the affairs of the Bank, however, the directors neglected the ordinary precautions against mismanagement. The bonds given by the cashier were not renewed at the expiration of his first year, and he rushed into hazardous speculations with the funds of the Bank, to supply the loss of which a vast and unknown amount of its bills were put into circulation with or without knowledge of the directors. These circulated for a time without suspicion; but as they began to return faster than the Bank was able to redeem them, embarrassments arose. Attempts were made to examine into

the cause of defalcation. These attempts resulted in nothing certain, except the funds of the Bank had disappeared, its credit was gone, and the former cashier had absconded to avoid arrest. It went out of business in 1855 just 2 years after starting. It's President, unable to face the defrauded stockholders and an indignant public sought a retreat for his family and his mortification in the far West. "

Many other interesting photos and books are now available to the public, so stop by to see.

Bill Gay, Vice President

New Additions

During the year we got a lot of interesting donations. Below is a sample of some of the gems.

- Mr. and Mrs. John C. Levensaler's Bible. The donor requested that we find and give this to a descendant of the family, which we did. It has a beautiful three dimensional leather cover.
- Dr. Everett Hodgkins medical library and office artifacts. Dr. Hodgkins received his MD in 1917 and practiced at 108 Main Street until his death in 1944. This came to us from his wife's niece, Carol Loyal, who had the items stored in their barn in Bristol after his death.
- Town scrapbooks were received that cover the time Val was town manager. What a wonderful comprehensive snapshot of the period, covering not just town business, but people, schools, sports, anything found in the newspapers.
- Aerial Views of Thomaston taken by Galo Hernandez.
- The Book Nathan F. Hart: An Innocent Man in a Felon's Cell by Alvin R. Dunton, 1892. A record of the misrepresentation of evidence and trial that led to the false conviction, later overturned – too late.
- Delano family documents and pictures, donated by Sanford Delano.
- Three old mast hoops found when emptying Myrtle Lowell's barn.
- Pin made in occupied Japan- post World War II, regularly worn by Evelyn Winslow Barter when she worked at the lunch counter at Woolworths in Rockland.
- Ship ½ model, found years ago at 39 Water St. during renovation, donated by Elizabeth Walker's son who was the owner at the time. We would love to identify its origin.
- Five display cases from Sandi Hoekstra, allowing significant expansion of the museum displays.

Curators Susan Devlin and Kyle Barter

Projects in the Works

- We are starting to significantly refresh/expand our exhibits, thanks to our new display cases. Two additions are definitely a part of this:
 - Dr. Hodgkin's medical exhibit. Dr. Richard Kahn has been helping go through the Hodgkins donation to explain what we have and where we might share some of the artifacts. This has provided interesting insights into early 20th century medical practices.
 - 19th century Prison sleigh. We are still trying to find a carpenter to fix the minor break before finishing the restoration (sanding and painting). Thus, it is not clear when it will arrive at the museum for its place of honor as you enter.
- We continue to work on the new walking tour (via phone access software). It will cover samples of homesteads/buildings on Main, Wadsworth, Water and Knox Streets. The text is close to final, but we are still searching for what photos to include.
- Publishing The Olsen House, a history of the house built in the late 1700s by the Hathorn family who acquired this land from Samuel Waldo. The book was nearly finished by author and Thomaston

teacher Brad Beckett before he died. We likely have found a donor to help with the cost – more about this when finalized. Thanks to Cathy Hahn for transcribing the draft into an electronic file to edit and to Virginia Olsen checking facts and helping track down photos to scan as we only have duplicates.

- Cataloging of Our Collection moves on to photographs and physical objects. The library and nearly all the unpublished documents are done FINALLY, but there is still a long way to go.
- Exterior Painting: The peeling windows are being tackled. We need to remember that our 1795 building is also an “artifact” to preserve.

As you can see there is a lot to do. It will be done more quickly and will be much more fun with additional volunteers.

Susan Devlin and our volunteer team

Help Us Stay Strong Financially

Thanks to the many who have renewed their membership and our new members. Despite the need again to cancel our major fundraiser, Home for the Holidays, we stay financially strong but have to dip into our endowment. Donations would be appreciated and we hope that you will attend our Christmas silent auction.

Thank you to the Gold Business Members shown below who have renewed their membership.

Sally Tabbutt Ploski, Membership, and Ron Gamage, Treasurer



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