

South Bristol Historical Society

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Newsletter

South Bristol, Maine 04568

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A Report from the S Road School Restoration Committee

The S Road School Restoration project has really taken off, in terms of both fund-raising and getting the work on the building underway. Thanks to the hard work and creative thinking of Chairperson Donna Plummer and with inspiration and help from Honorary co-Chairperson Barbara Hamlin and the rest of the Committee, just about every person with a connection to South Bristol or the S Road School has been contacted. The results are most heartening. In addition to the Town Meeting's approval of a \$7,500 contribution, requests to several charitable foundations have resulted in grants of \$43,500 to date, giving a major jump start to the process. SBHS is grateful to the Town and to the Davis Family Foundation, the Nancy and Herbert Burns Foundation, the Tripod Fund (Madden family), the Margaret McNally McFarland Fund and the Maine Community Foundation for their support.

The public phase of the fund-raising effort got off to a terrific start with a Plant Sale at the S Road School on June 14. Literally dozens of people donated plants of all kinds, and still more stopped by to purchase them and take a good look at the old schoolroom and the exhibits displayed there, raising almost \$700 for the Restoration. Next on the Committee's agenda was getting out the mailings, first to SBHS members and then to the entire community. On hand to help stuff, stamp and address hundreds of envelopes were Genie Cole, Cotton Damon, Ann Doyle, Lois Drukker,

Cynthia Garrels, Linda Johnson, Lou Lasher, Kathy Norwood, Donna Plummer, Anne Sears, and Gail Seiders. We are delighted that as this newsletter went to press, more than 160 individuals had responded with donations, and the envelopes are still arriving in the SBHS mailbox.

Though there is still a way to go to meet the goal of \$100,000, enough funds were on hand in September to allow contractor Kenneth Lincoln to get started on the foundation and exterior reconstruction so that the building would be secure before another winter sets in. A number of the large trees that were encroaching on the roof were also removed, and the first coat of paint applied. What a transformation - and we have just begun!



Finding enough desks is turning out to be perhaps the biggest challenge. Please check out estate sales, tag sales – and your attic or barn – for a desk like this, approximately 42" across the desk top. Let us know if you spot one (644-1234 SBHS or 644-1581 Nat Hammond) and we will find a way to bring it back to the classroom.



The S Road School as it looked on October 26, 2008.

In the mid-seventies Richard Hawkins, principal of our local elementary school, decided it was important to restore the little one-room S Road School. It was his hope to hold classes there in the style of the era when Sarah Emery taught her classes. Mr. Hawkins put his students to work researching the school's history and he took on the joy-filled task of interviewing Sarah Emery. We have those taped interviews at our Historical Society Building along with Miss Emery's school bell and other interesting memorabilia. Unfortunately, that particular restoration project foundered—BUT—it is with great pleasure that I can report "the ball has been picked up" and Richard's dream WILL come true—for all our community to enjoy! Our mailing to our residents has brought wonderful results and as chairperson of our Restoration Committee I cannot thank our caring supporters enough. Please stop by the little school to see the progress!

Thank you!
Donna Plummer

News Notes

Sincere thanks to our **new life members Ron and Michele Royal** for their most welcome support. Many thanks as well to new **sustaining members Beth Fisher, Don and Carolyn Maunz, Mark and Pam Mitchell, Polly and Dick Ulin, and Elizabeth Welles**; and to new members **Rosamond Becker, Elizabeth Becker and Alan Ouellet, Jean Eaton, Cynthia Garrels, Priscilla House, Martha Mason, Victoria Munsey, Carolyn Nutter, Carl and Emily Poole, Warren and Deb Storch and Edgar Thompson**. We appreciate the support of all our members, represented by 195 memberships, 75% of which are family memberships... **SBHS programs** were well-attended and informative; **Gail Seiders and Ellen Shew** made our May "movie night" something special with their home-made (not from a microwave) popcorn; the images taken from the **Eastern Illustrated** postcards and from **Red Boutillier's** collection were fascinating as presented by Niles Parker, Executive Director of the Penobscot Marine Museum; members **Polly Ulin, Carolyn McKeon and Cathy Norwood** were joined by **Lance Kelsey** in presenting a fascinating look into the history of a unique bit of South Bristol landscape, the Plummer Point Preserve; **Dave Andrews** continued his recounting of the history of South Bristol... **The SBHS building** was once again open twice a week during the summer, thanks to **Cynthia Garrels and John Rounds** with help from time to time from **Barbara Hamlin and Donna Plummer**... **Sales of *A History of the Families and their Houses* by H. Landon Warner and Ellen Vincent's *Down on the Island, Up on the Main*** continue strong, thanks in large measure to **Sam and Betsy Graves** at the **Harborside Café** and **Deb and Warren Storch** at the **Walpole Barn**. We are most grateful to them...**Please welcome** new trustee **Kathy Stockwell**, elected at our Annual Meeting in July.

**Visit our new website
www.southbristolhistoricalsociety.org.**

People from all over the country do visit our website - then call or email with a wide variety of inquiries. Here are a few recent SBHS responses: helped someone from Sebastian, Florida, find the house in which her mother had been born; identified the house where an aunt had spent summers around the turn of the century, and provided information about it from H. Landon Warner's book; gave research source suggestions to a Centre College, Kentucky, student from Damariscotta working on an environmental history of mid-coast Maine; tried to answer a question from a Long Island, NY resident about a "Wells & Co." thought to have been in the menhaden oil business in South Bristol; supplied information from Christine Huston Dodge's Vital Records of Old Bristol and Nobleboro for

someone in Gray, ME trying to trace an ancestor; once again, the Dodge volume provided information for a gentleman from Portland, Oregon who was planning a visit to Maine in search of information about an Oregon artist named Charles C. McKim who reportedly had roots in this area.

Do You Know???

Gathering South Bristol history seems to turn up as many questions as answers. If you know the answer to any of the following, please call SBHS at 644-1234 or send an email to SBHS@tidewater.net.

Why was the "S Road School" moved twice before it reached its present location?

Why does the S Road School have two front doors?

What happened to the World War II memorial plaque that was once in front of the old Rutherford Library?

How many bowling alleys were there in South Bristol years ago?

What were the names and locations of the menhaden (or pogy) factories that were once in South Bristol?

Winter Wednesdays

A long list of interesting and important tasks awaits **Winter Wednesday** participants. Starting October 23, the SBHS museum/research center will be open from 1 to 3 pm on Wednesday afternoons and all are welcome to stop by. No reservations required, no special skills needed, though a sense of humor helps! This year we will be "multi-tasking" since as we work we will be listening to the audio tapes that have been added to our collection over the years so that we can better identify them and assess their importance. Among the tasks on tap are organizing and cataloguing records of the Christmas Cove Improvement Association and Ellen Vincent's voluminous South Bristol files and photos. Work will continue on the entry of data into our museum software. You may also be asked to take home one of several video tapes for identification and review. We will take holiday time off on November 26 and on December 14 and 31, planning to be back at work on January 7 through April. Please join us!

Corrections or additions to *A History of the Families and their Houses: South Bristol, Maine*. Please remember, and tell others, that there is a **special tear-out sheet** at the back of the Warner book which can be sent to SBHS with any corrections or significant additions to the text. We will issue an update based on the material we receive, including the sources of the information. So far, we have received information from the following: Cynthia Palmer Sherman, Gail Shand, John C. Preston, Rosamond Cook Becker, Laura Mills, Doris Lindblade Burn, Sarah Birkett, and Robin Spaulding.

Please take note of your address on this mailing—if your name is circled in red, it means that you have not yet paid dues for the 2008-2009 year. A membership form can be clipped from the last page of this newsletter and mailed with your check. Thank you!

Plummer Point Preserve - A History of the Land

Excerpts from the report prepared for the Damariscotta River Association

At the September meeting of SBHS, Polly Ulin, Carolyn McKeon, Kathy Norwood and Lance Kelsey shared the research and the family memories that went into the report prepared for the DRA. For those of you who missed the very entertaining evening, what follows is a shortened version of that report, including verbatim excerpts which are enclosed in quotation marks. Complete copies are available at the SBHS museum.

The First Plummers

"Plummer Point Preserve lies in the southern part of South Bristol, west of State Route 129 and north of Pine Bluff Lane. The peninsula is a granite ledge that stretches northward into the Damariscotta River, bordering Seal Cove on its western shore and Long Cove on the east."

The recorded history of the Preserve land begins with a 1751 map identifying John Wirling as the former owner of the land believed to have been purchased by Bedfield Plummer Sr. and Sarah Plummer, his wife, in 1763 after arriving by barge from Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Wirling, of Scotch-Irish descent, acquired his land through David Dunbar as a crown grant from King George II. Later purchases extended Bedfield Plummer's land from the Damariscotta River on the west to Johns Bay on the east and from McClintock Hill on the north to somewhere south of Seal Cove including the two islands off the western shore of Plummer Point.

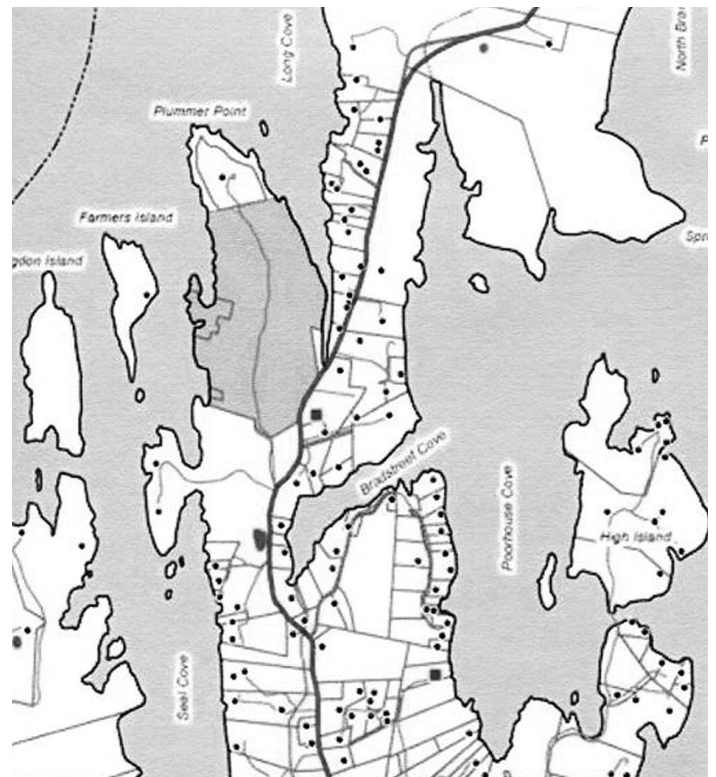
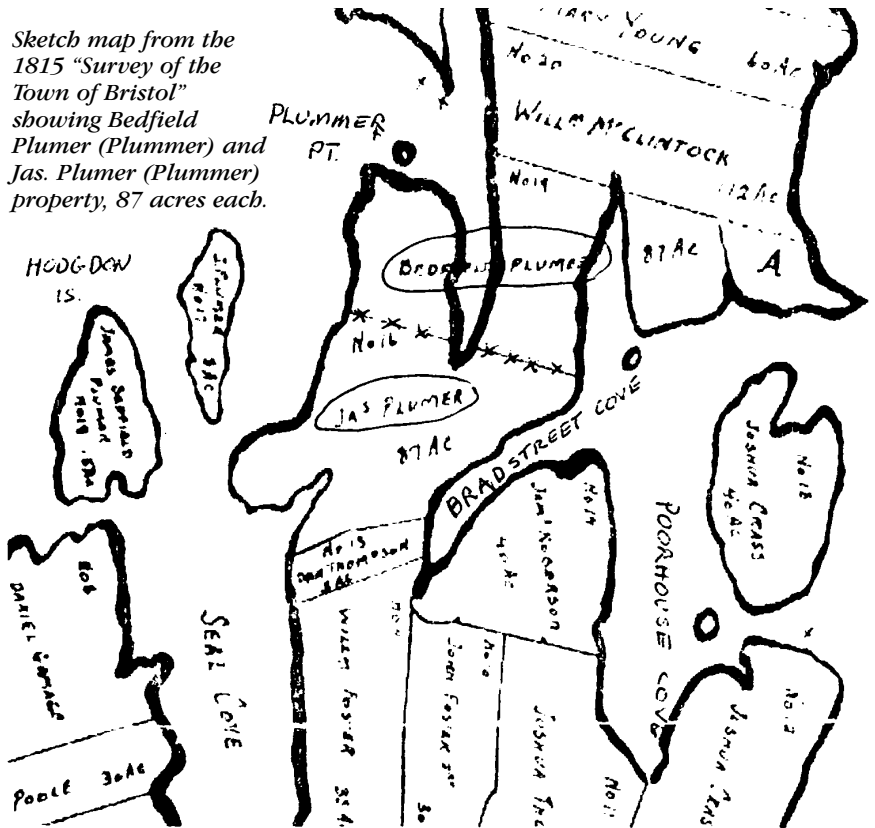
"A mark on the 1751 map indicates a dwelling at the center of the peninsula, but this is not the location that great great granddaughter Katherine Poole Norwood remembers from family stories. Katherine recalls as a child playing on the rocks of the old foundation, trying to imagine what life was like when her ancestors lived there. Unfortunately, when Route 129 was rerouted around 1970, the remains were covered over, and all traces of a family homestead on Plummer Point were lost."

By 1793, two of Bedfield Plummer Sr.'s sons, James (1760-1854) and Bedfield Jr. (1766-1818), "had acquired their father's home and most of his land, from the Damariscotta River on the west to Johns Bay on the east, for a sum of one hundred pounds. In turning his lands and home over to his sons, Bedfield Sr. assured his own future well-being by bonding his sons in a legal document detailing how the new owners were to care for their father and mother for the rest of their days."

Soon after their father's death in 1803, the property was divided in half. An 1815 survey maps the division, known as "Plummer's Division," as a straight line from the Damariscotta River to Johns Bay, cutting across the south end of Long Cove close to where the road runs today. Bedfield Jr. owned the land north of the line and James the land south of the line.

"Poole family members recall remnants of a wire fence

Sketch map from the 1815 "Survey of the Town of Bristol" showing Bedfield Plumer (Plummer) and Jas. Plumer (Plummer) property, 87 acres each.



2006 map showing DRA's Plummer Point Preserve, shaded area.

that probably marked the boundary between James Plummer's land on the south and Bedfield Jr.'s on the north. For many years, a rough track from the road to the northern end of Plummer Point cut through wetlands and

around rocky outcroppings. In the 1950s, it was straightened and graded, eventually to become Plummer Point Road, with access to trails on today's Preserve. For the next 129 years Plummer Point remained divided...between the brothers. As far as we know, neither brother ever lived on Plummer Point." James lived in the family homestead overlooking Johns Bay. Bedfield Jr. built his own house, also on Johns Bay, in 1810, property now owned by David and Gina Riddiford.

The Southern Division 1854-1946

The southern end of Plummer Point passed from the Plummers to the Poole family in 1854 when James died and left his property to his daughter, Martha (1811-1883), and her husband, Ebenezer (Eben) Poole (1806-1896). It remained in the Poole family for the next 98 years. "Eben and Martha and their eight children lived in the James Plummer family homestead on Johns Bay but lost the house in a fire in 1850. After several years in temporary quarters on Texas Road, they moved back to occupy a new cape-style farm house on the same site. Four generations of Pooles lived in that house, making their living as farmers, fishermen, and carpenters. Today it is the home of Richard and Patricia Jackson, summer residents from New Hampshire."

In October 1881, Eben Poole sold the family homestead to his son, Everett A. Poole (1857-1946) for two thousand dollars. In lieu of payment, Eben bonded his son to support and maintain himself and Martha 'for the rest of their natural lives.'... According to Katherine Poole Norwood, Everett had been living above a store in Damariscotta and painting for a living. (Many of his oil paintings were sold, but some are still in the family.) In accepting the bond, Everett and his wife, Katherine Cudworth Poole of Round Pond (1861-1929), then moved into the house on Johns Bay, where the couple cared for Everett's parents until they died in 1883 (Martha) and 1897 (Eben)."

"...A dairy farmer as well as a painter, Everett is well remembered for his service as the first clerk of the new town of South Bristol when the town split off from Bristol and incorporated in 1915. He served in this capacity for 30 years, from 1915 to 1945, the year before he died at age 89. He was also a gifted calligrapher and engraver. For many years, his fine penmanship and steel engravings decorated marriage certificates and other important documents, as well as the cover of the annual Town Report. Everett's wife, Katherine, was a teacher at the S Road School in the 1880's."

In 1910, Everett set up a steam-powered saw mill on Plummer Point to harvest white pine from his land south of the wire fence line and close to Long Cove. The saw mill is long gone, but Everett's grandchildren, Raymond and Katherine, remember as children finding piles of sawdust and pieces of rusted corrugated iron, the remains of the operation. 'Grandpa sold trees to the Pastorus Lumber Company,' Katherine recalls. 'Often the workers from the mill would go up to Grandpa's house for dinner, and some roomed in the old farmhouse. This was before my time. Dad (Clifton) was just a little boy.' When the Plummer

Point mill closed, sometime around 1930, the land was clear-cut for pasture but eventually reverted to forest.

After Katherine's death in 1929, her widower, Everett Poole, continued to live in the house with his son, Clifton (1903-1972) and Clifton's wife, Frances (aka Fannie) Pinkham Poole (1907-1985). Clifton was a boat builder, employed at Harvey Gamage's Shipyard in South Bristol. In the barn behind the house, he built and sold his own skiffs, some of which are still in use today. He also raised cows and pastured sheep on Plummer Point. Their daughter, Katherine, was born in 1930 in the front room of the old homestead. Katherine, along with siblings Raymond and Barbara, grew up on their grandfather's farm, playing in the meadows above Johns Bay and roaming the woods of Plummer Point. Much of what we know about the Poole land on Plummer Point in those years comes from the recollections of Katherine and Raymond. As a boy, Raymond often played with his friends in the granite quarry.

Katherine enjoys remembering stories she heard as a child. A favorite story-teller was her Aunt Alys, Clifton's older sister. 'It was Daddy and Aunt Alys's job to go over to Plummer Point and chase the cows home,' recalls Katherine. 'The cow and sheep crossing was across what is now Rte. 129, (near) Bradstreet Lane. Once Aunt Alys thought she heard...a bear. She called to her brother, 'Wait for me! I hear a bear!' It didn't take (them) long to get the cows in the barn that night!'

In 1943, Everett Poole sold the homestead and land on both sides of the road to his son, Clifton. Clifton and Fannie continued to live in the family home for the rest of their lives. However, in 1946, Clifton sold the Poole land on the west side of the road, including the south corner of Plummer Point, to Charles F. Lyman of Marblehead, Massachusetts."

The Northern Division – 1818-1946

When Bedfield Plummer, Jr. died in 1818, the northern subdivision apparently went to his son David, who would have been ten years old at the time. David's land would have included the tip of Plummer Point and the Long Cove shore where the Brown, Vaughan, Hirsch, and McKeon homes are today. Although David and his wife, Nancy Goudy Plummer (1808-1896), reportedly had seven sons, he sold his property, including the northern end of Plummer Point, to Thomas Erskine in 1856 for \$2,500.

During Erskine's ownership there were several small quarrying operations along the shore. In 1873, he sold to William T. Kelsey (1847-1911). "The deed gives us a clue to the use of the land at that time for timber, with its stipulation that 'William H. Wheeler (will have) the privilege of taking the wood now standing or cut on the northwesterly part of the Westerly Point of said land as now marked to him by spotted trees.' 'William was quite a businessman,' says his great grandson, Lance Kelsey. In addition to farming, he was ever alert to business opportunities, one of which was the quarries on Plummer Point. Although not a quarrier himself, William developed the quarry operation into a small but successful business. His son, Herman, eventually joined him in the business as a quarry worker.

Plummer Point Preserve *continued from p.4*

Since dynamite was too powerful for these smaller quarries, Herman had to use a hand drill to make holes in the rock seams. Working with Dan (Centy) Seiders, one man held the drill bit in place and turned it by hand as the other hit it with a 20-pound sledge hammer. The holes were then filled with water, plugged, and left until the water froze and split the rock. For young Herman, it was a way to make money: four cents for every six-inch-deep hole. Once broken out, the blocks of granite were dragged to the shore on wooden sledges for additional chipping and shaping before being loaded onto ships. Plummer Point granite was taken by barge or schooner to Boston and sold as paving stones. Short drill holes can be seen today on the granite cliffs off the Shore Trail of the Plummer Point Preserve.”...

“Lance Kelsey tells us that his great grandfather’s business ventures extended to ship building, brick making, and mail delivery by stagecoach. Every year for about 20 years William built a schooner at the Kelsey Farm on the river (now site of the Wawenock golf course), then ballasted it with granite cut by Herman for the trip to Boston. After selling both the schooner and its cargo, he took a steamer back to Bristol, where he began construction on his next ship.” William Kelsey was a Selectman for the Town of Bristol and Overseer of the Poor and maintained a residence on Johns Bay for the indigents who worked on his farm. He continued to live in the Kelsey homestead, which today is the clubhouse of the Wawenock Golf Course.

After the deaths of William Kelsey (1911) and of his wife (1915), the total parcel was divided among her five children. “‘The Point’ was left to her son, Herman (1873-1961), who had worked its quarries with his father. By this time, however, the demand for granite paving stones had declined and the quarrying operation was no longer a profitable business. Herman lived in South Bristol village, where he was a well-known lobsterman. During the 73

years that the land was in the Kelsey family, many people referred to the point as Kelsey Point, a name that some continue to use today, and the old granite quarry has been given the name ‘Kelsey Quarry’.”

1946 to the present – Lyman, Richardson and the DRA

In 1946, Charles F. Lyman and Elizabeth Lyman of Marblehead, Massachusetts purchased the former James Plummer sub-division from Everett Poole, and from Herman Kelsey, the land once owned by James’s brother Bedfield Jr. Thus Plummer Point was once more under single ownership. Fred Lyman, a well-known yachtsman and boat builder, as well as a veteran of two world wars, designed and built 68 boats in his career. The Lymans thought they had found a simpler, more tranquil life on Plummer Point; they cleared a track through the dense forest large enough for their Jeep and opened up a house site close to the end of the point. However, according to daughter Joan, one year later they decided on a more practical option for their growing family, sold the Plummer land without building, and moved to a house on Biscay Pond in Bremen.

“The new owners of Plummer Point were Ingram and Helen Richardson of Mendham, New Jersey, who now had approximately 45 acres north of the Poole’s fence line (the old “Plummer Divide”). An additional 42 acres south of the fence line were acquired by the Richardsons in 1961. The land that once had been logged and then grazed now had reverted to a dense spruce, oak and pine forest. By the 1950s, the forest had regenerated sufficiently to allow limited pulpwood cutting over 2/3 of the property. White pine and spruce were cut, while red pine and selected large diameter trees were left standing. With no buildings on Plummer Point, the Richardsons and their three children spent their first summers there in World War II surplus

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army tents, cooking outdoors and hauling fresh water from a spring at the bottom of a steep ledge. In 1950 and 1951, they built and moved into two cabins at the edge of the clearing that the Lymans had left. A Richardson daughter was married in one of the cabins in 1959. The cabins are still there today, summer home to four generations. Early in this period, the track from State Route 129 to the end of the point, a length of .8 mile, was rerouted around low lying areas, then graveled and graded.

In 1964, Ingram and Helen left New Jersey to become year-round residents in a small house they built at the end of the point. Water from an artesian well and a propane-powered generator supplied their basic needs. But in March 1967 while Ingram and Helen were away, an explosive fire, probably caused by a spark from a generator, burned the house to the ground. Firefighters from Damariscotta, Pemaquid, and surrounding towns pumped thousands of gallons of water from the river to saturate the trees and save the forest, but the house and everything in it were gone. The couple moved back into the cabins to live while builder Raymond Poole and his crew erected a Deck House near where the former home had stood.

Between 1963 and 1973, the Richardsons donated most of their Plummer Point land to The Nature Conservancy (TNC), eventually deeding 71 acres to establish the Plummer Point Preserve and donating a conservation easement on the point's remaining nine acres, where the new house was built.

When the Richardson Family and TNC cut a trail from the center of the point to the shore, it did not take long for local walkers to begin discovering the beauty of Plummer Point. Adjoining property owners to the south, Robert and Adele Gardner, later expanded public access by granting a conservation easement to DRA and agreeing to the building of connecting trails along their Seal Cove frontage.”...

“In his role as a governor of the Nature Conservancy, Ingram was instrumental at this time in organizing a conservation group that formed initially to encourage the protection and stewardship of local lands. In 1973, this group was legally chartered as the Damariscotta River Association, a non-profit conservation organization which later became a regional land trust.”... By this time, failing health prevented Ingram from taking an active part in the rapid development of the organization he had helped to start, but as long as he lived he recalled with pride that the first meeting leading to establishment of the DRA was held in the living room of his home on Plummer Point.

After Ingram's death in 1993, The Nature Conservancy transferred the Plummer Point deed, along with the adjoining conservation easement, to the DRA. ...When Helen Richardson died in 1999, her children became the owners of the family home and nine acres inside the DRA easement. Today the Richardson children and grandchildren continue to work with the DRA to maintain Plummer Point Preserve for the enjoyment of generations to come. “