

South Bristol Historical Society

Est. 1998

Newsletter

South Bristol, Maine 04568

207-315-0558 • SBHistorical@gmail.com • www.southbristolhistoricalsociety.org

Volume 18 Number 1

Spring 2015

South Bristol 1915-2015: The Centennial Year Is Here!

The Town's Centennial Committee has designated the weekend of **July 17-19** as the primary focus for South Bristol's Centennial Celebration. Current plans for the weekend include a parade, music at several venues, a lobster bake, a street dance, dedication of the Town Landing and many other exciting events. SBHS will be taking an active role in the July festivities, as described below.

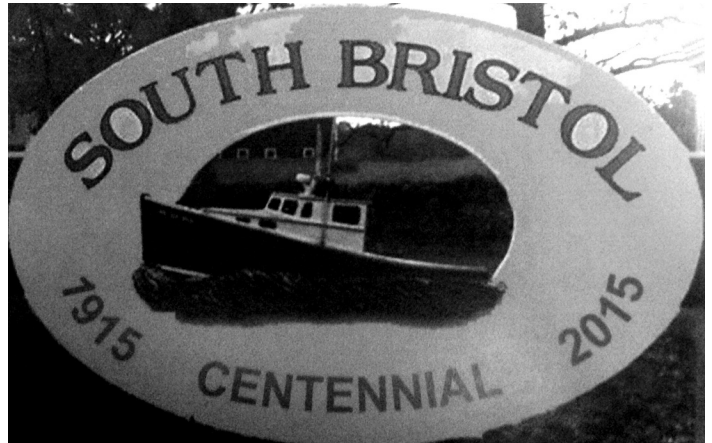
The first SBHS event will be hosted by the Christmas Cove Improvement Association in its historic "Casino" on **Wednesday, July 15**. The brief Annual Meeting and election of officers and trustees will start at 7:00 pm, to be followed at 7:30 when Stan Wells will tell the story of South Bristol's separation from Bristol, reviewing both the reasons for seeking independence and the lengthy process that led to the birth of our town in 1915. A re-enactment of some of the actual debate in the legislature over the bill creating South Bristol will give a flavor of the high emotions surrounding the proposal.

Dedication of the new Veterans' Memorial will take place on **Friday, July 17th** at 1 PM at the Town Hall, honoring the service of veterans from WW I to the present. SBHS has been working diligently over the past two years to compile a list of veterans who resided in or have a significant connection to South Bristol. The list will be in a notebook placed in a special weather-resistant wooden container so that the names and their military service can easily be read and remembered.

On **Saturday**, the South Bristol School gymnasium will feature Ellen Vincent's exhibit "Down on the Island, Up on the Main." This is the first time that this history of South Bristol told through pictures and the words of its residents has been shown in its entirety since 2003. Also available for viewing will be "A Town Is Born," the website presentation created in 2013 by SBHS and the 5th and 6th graders at the South Bristol School with a grant and technical assistance from the Maine Historical Society. It is hoped to have the exhibit open on Friday and Sunday as well.

The S Road Schoolhouse will also be open on **Saturday and Sunday** from 1 to 4 PM featuring for a second time last year's display panels which tell the history of the bridges at the Gut which figured significantly in the movement for separation from Bristol.

We welcome volunteers to help staff the exhibits at the Elementary School, the S Road School and the SBHS Museum at various times during the weekend. Contact SBHS at SBHistorical@gmail.com or call Ellen Wells 644-1584, Cathy Stockwell 644-1253 or Donna Plummer 644-8443 if you can lend a hand even for a short time.



The Town's official logo for the Centennial

And a Preview of More 2015 Programs...

In keeping with the Centennial theme, on **June 17** Dave Andrews will reprise his 2004 talk "The Heyday of the Hotels." The numerous hotels and the 'summer people' who came to them and often returned to build their own summer homes in South Bristol were a significant factor in the move to break away from Bristol. On **September 16**, Kevin Johnson, Photo Archivist at the Penobscot Marine Museum will present "South Bristol: The Postcard View," from the Marine Museum's extensive collection. Both meetings will be held in the Parish Hall of the Union Church in South Bristol, starting at 7:30 pm.

The S Road School will again be the venue for a special exhibit, "The Way We Were," on the weekend of **August 14-16**. Under Cathy Stockwell's creative leadership, the old schoolhouse will feature images and stories of life in South Bristol in the decade which saw the Town's separation from Bristol. Weather and the many projects underway for the Centennial combined to warrant postponing our annual cemetery walk and work day from its usual early May date to **October 10**. Let's hope it hasn't started snowing again by then!

Be sure to mark these dates and those listed as part of the Centennial Celebration on your calendar, and check your June membership letter and the Lincoln County News for more details and any updates.

Welcome to the *NEW* SBHS Museum

The next time you stop by the South Bristol Historical Society building, you'll be in for a surprise!

A group of Trustees including Cathy Stockwell, Carolyn McKeon, Sue Edwards, Carol Kelsey, Deb Storch, Donna Plummer and Genie Cole have spent 'Winter Wednesdays' giving the museum a major face-lift. The room appears brighter, more spacious, much warmer and inviting.

You may first notice the beautiful ten-foot long wood counter which once stood in the grocery store two doors down the hill from SBHS. In front of this counter are items that immediately remind you that you are in a fishing village – a wooden lobster trap, buoys, a clam hod. The many local history books SBHS offers for sale are arranged on the top of the counter.

The rear (east) wall may be next to catch your attention with its old wooden signs from our post offices, the Autograph Library and the Island Grocery. You eyes might next settle on the ends of the two display shelves. On the left side hangs the Red Men regalia worn by leaders during official ceremonies, complete with fringed leggings and feathered head-dress. On the right is the red wool jacket donated by the Thompson family, worn by Herbert Thompson and his father before him cutting ice at the Thompson Ice House.

The left (north) wall features three large framed pictures; one, painted by Parker Gamage of Bristol, depicts a barkentine of which Joseph Drummond Sproul is believed to have been the captain and below it hangs a portrait of Captain Sproul. The third is a landscape painted by Everett A. Poole, the first clerk of the Town of South Bristol. Nearby wooden shelves are filled with photographs and items related to boat building and fishing.

A quick tour of the *new* museum



As you enter the front door

To the left of the front door is a glass case containing toys of yesteryear; paper dolls, cloth books, roller skates, a tom-tom, board games, hand-made dolls and an antique doll that went to sea. Her story appears elsewhere in this issue.

The two double-sided display shelves, obtained when Belknap's Hardware Store in Damariscotta closed its doors, have had an inexpensive but transformative make-over. Simple white foam core and paper totally cover the utilitarian peg-board as less-distracting backdrop for our displays. The shelves have also been repositioned perpendicular to the store counter, with ample room to explore all four sides.

Each side of the display shelves focuses on a theme from South Bristol's history. The Education shelves are filled with photographs of students from our local schools, books and teaching items, and a tribute to Miss Sarah Emery. The Home and Family area has sewing, cooking and gardening items. There is a large collection of delicate lace cuffs and collars made by Charlotte and Sarah Emery, quilts, crewel work, an embroidered baby bib and christening dress. There are hats, gloves, shoes and a little boy's sailor suit. Ladies' Aid Cookbooks contain our grandmothers' recipes, still the best!

Business and Industry displays photographs of and items from the many general and dry-goods stores once in the village. Dining room china, souvenir pitchers and dishes, card and photos give a flavor of the thriving summer hotel business. The Social Organizations shelves contain journals from Ladies' Aid Societies, documents from the Anchor Lodge of the Masons, a Pocahontas membership log, bingo cards and tokens from the Red Men organization, and many installation photographs for these organizations, including Eastern Star. Items from the Christmas Cove Improvement Association round out the display.

Stop by and explore the many treasures that have been generously donated to our museum. Current open hours are from 1 to 3 pm on Wednesday: expanded summer hours will be announced in May.



On your left, beside the door

A quick tour of the *new* museum, continued



Against the wall on your left



Looking further down the left side

*Shown at right, memorabilia
from school days*



Back at the front door, on your right



Right side of the center aisle



Little Nell's Doll

One of the most unique items in the SBHS museum is a doll, at least 136 years old, which belonged to Nellie Wells, daughter of Marshall M. Wells and grandmother of Arletta Thorpe Rice. Kenneth Rice donated the doll to the Historical Society in 2005, in memory of his wife Arletta. She had been given the doll by a cousin, Irma



Condon, along with the following document with information her cousin had gathered about the doll:

"[This] doll was bought for 'Little Nell' (Nellie Wells) by her father, Captain Marshall Wells, in New York City just before she sailed with her father, mother and sister Susan for Spain in 1869. She was 5 yrs. old and her sister 17 yrs. The cargo consisted mostly of wine casks and return cargo mostly raisins. From my grandmother's diary I

think the trip was from July to Oct. 26. From things told me by my grandmother the ship was becalmed for a long time on the return trip and she became tired of eating raisins.

"The doll is a Greiner. From Coleman's 'The Collector's Encyclopedia of Dolls': 'Greiner, Ludwig. 1840-74. Philadelphia, Pa. 1874-83, succeeded by Greiner Bros. (Ludwig's sons) 1890-1900. Made papier-mâché dolls' heads, in accordance with the earliest known U.S. patent for a doll's head. The ingredients in the 1858 Greiner patent were 1 lb. white paper, 1 lb. dry Spanish whiting, 1 lb. rye flour, 1 oz. glue, with linen cloths to reinforce the head. Greiner dolls came in a wide variety of sizes, ranging from about 13" to over 35". The molded hair usually had a center part, and in the 1858 versions were usually black, but in the 1872 versions there were as many blondes as black-haired dolls, if not more. A few Greiner dolls had brown painted eyes and a very few had glass eyes. The eyes were often various shades of turquoise.'

"This doll has the original paper label on back shoulder plate. 'Greiner's Patent Head, No. 3, Pat. March 30th, '58.' She also has the black hair and brown painted eyes. Brown eyes were rarer than blue in any of the early dolls and, therefore increase their value. Size "0" was usually 13" high in a Greiner so imagine the original body on this doll was taller because of the No. 3 mark on label. The doll was this size when it came to me, had celluloid hands and was dressed in a hoop skirt made from grey, changeable silk which was a piece from great-grandmother Wells' wedding dress. The dress was in shreds so in 1971, had the present dress made and the celluloid hands replaced. Original hands probably cloth or brown leather. The underclothes and hat were what your grandmother had on the doll. Interesting thing about the early Greiner dolls was that their noses showed a lot of wear such as this one ones."

Now that the Centennial year has arrived, a refresher on what caused the people in what is now known as South Bristol to seek separation from the town of Bristol seems appropriate. The following Petition, which was included in a 2004 SBHS Newsletter, provides some answers.

To the Members of the Legislature of The State of Maine.

A PETITION

for the division of the town of Bristol and some of the reasons therefor.

By the People of South Bristol, Christmas Cove and the vicinity.

To the Members of the Legislature of the State of Maine:

The map attached shows the town of Bristol, Maine. It shows also a line running north from the head of the Eastern Cove of John's River to the Damariscotta River Road, and thence westerly to the river.

The people living to the west and south of the line described ask to be set off from the Town of Bristol and incorporated into a new town, to be called South Bristol. Their request is based on the following, among other, reasons:

Size of the Town Prevents Proper Attention.

Bristol is 15 miles long, exclusive of islands, and about 8 miles wide, also exclusive of islands; consequently, its size, combined with lack of transportation facilities, makes it difficult and perhaps impossible for the Selectmen to treat all

parts of the town alike. South Bristol has suffered by reason of the size of the town.

The People of South Bristol Are Practically Disfranchised.

South Bristol is nine miles from the town house of Bristol Mills. To get to the town meeting a resident of South Bristol must travel nine miles, and a resident of Christmas Cove, ten miles, over roads which are frequently almost impassable. There is no other way. If all the teams in South Bristol were used they could carry only one-quarter of the votes. A team can make only one trip and sometimes not that.

Fellow Townsmen Are Strangers To Each Other.

We are nine miles from Bristol Mills, ten miles from New Harbor and twelve miles from round Pond – all villages of the Town of Bristol. Our interests are entirely different to

Petition, continued from previous page

theirs. In the northern part the people are engaged principally in farming. In our part, their occupation is fishing and "summer business," so called.

The peninsulas, bays, and islands in the south are attractive to people seeking summer homes and vacations, but we are dependent for success largely upon the condition of the roads.

Our Roads Are Not Roads At all.

They are the next thing to plowed fields.

Warrants for town meetings and other gatherings are posted at Bristol Mills, Round Pond, and New Harbor. Occasionally a notice is posted at South Bristol, due to the kindness of some person who may happen to come down from the northern part of the town. Ordinarily, the nearest notice given the people at South Bristol is nine miles away, and as we have no business relations with the other parts of the town, we do not receive proper notice of town meetings.

The Bristol High School Building Is Nine Miles from South Bristol.

There is no place in the vicinity of the High School to board scholars and it is too far to transport them backward and forward. There is no way to reach the High School except by road – consequently, South Bristol scholars are obliged to go out of town to attend High School. They either go backward and forward by boat (30 miles daily) or board at Damariscotta. In either case, the parents are required to pay for their tuition, transportation, and board, despite the fact that they are taxed for the support of the Bristol High School, which it is impossible for them to use.

We Are Obligated to Appeal To the County Commissioners.

The roads in the South Bristol section are bad and sometimes almost impassable, and in places positively dangerous. Requests for proper protection of the embankments near the Holly Inn at Christmas Cove, around the head of Christmas Cove and along the road eastward from the head of the Cove, have had no result. It has been necessary to ask the County Commissioners to examine some of the roads before the Selectmen could be induced to cause them to be repaired.

The South Bristol section has not had its fair share of the money raised by the town for highway improvement.

Such work as is done is usually done in the fall, after the summer visitors have gone, and therefore at a time when

the improvements are of the least possible value to us. As we are dependent largely upon summer visitors, we feel that the roads should be improved in the spring time, before the arrival of the summer visitors.

No part of the appropriation for State aid highways has ever been expended on the roads in or within 70 miles of South Bristol. It has been spent on the roads to Bristol Mills, Round Pond, and New Harbor, which are in consequence much better situated than we are in regard to highways.

A few years ago, the people of South Bristol and Christmas Cove petitioned the Selectmen for a change in the location of one of their principal roads. The Selectmen held a hearing, laid out a road, and submitted the question to the annual town meeting, which voted to raise \$175,000 to make the improvement. The following summer one of the Selectmen decided, without a hearing, that the alteration was unnecessary and the next town meeting voted to use the \$175,000 to pay outstanding orders. Without authority, they used the money for an entirely different purpose and the road remains to this day unchanged and most dangerous.

We Have No Sidewalks Other Parts of Town Have.

In 1911 the town voted to remove all wooden sidewalks and replace them with gravel or cement. The town officials caused the walks at South Bristol and Christmas Cove to be removed and they never been replaced. Even at the cemetery, it became necessary for the residents, by contribution and their own labor, to make the road and walk passable. In other parts of the town, despite the order of the annual meeting, the wooden sidewalks were allowed to remain.

The Bridge at South Bristol Is Notoriously Dangerous.

It has been so recognized for the last seven years, and although frequent requests have been made, it has not been replaced.

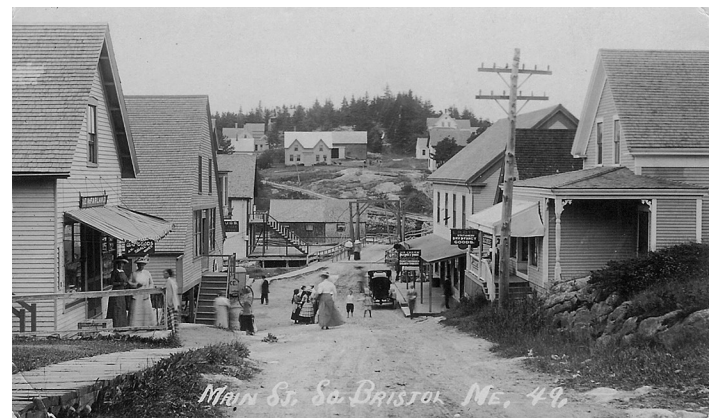
The town has been obliged to settle two lawsuits for damages, one caused by defective sidewalks and the other by the notoriously dangerous bridge.

Appropriations for improvement of the town house, certain of the school houses and other improvements in other parts of the town have been largely overdrawn without

continued on next page



The "notoriously dangerous" bridge as it looked around 1913.



The offending boardwalk can be seen in the lower left of this view looking north toward the bridge, also around 1913.

South Bristol Historical Society
2124 State Route 129
PO Box 229
South Bristol, ME 04568

Petition, continued from previous page

authority, while in South Bristol the expenditure of money, properly appropriated, has been unduly delayed and sometimes diverted to other purposes.

The Proposed New Town.

Towns are created for the convenience of the inhabitants. They derive their existence from the will of the legislature and by it may be created or divided, or two or more may be joined. The legislature must determine what is for the best interest of the state and the people of the town. Whenever a portion of a town has a sufficient number of inhabitants and estates to maintain a town government in all its forms, and can be more conveniently governed as a separate town and its separation from the parent town will not cause too great loss or inconvenience to the parent town, it is their right and privilege to ask the legislature to incorporate them into a new town.

The Request for Division Is Practically Unanimous in the Section of Bristol.

South Bristol is larger than 150 towns and more valuable than 225 towns in Maine.

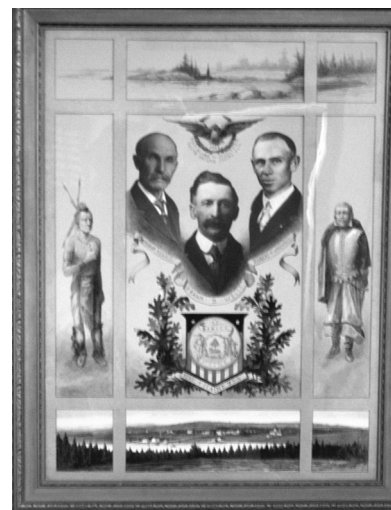
The valuation of the section which asks to be incorporated into a new town is about \$330,000. This is not a small valuation, for, as we have stated above, 225 towns have a lower valuation.

The number of polls in South Bristol would be about 200. More than 150 towns have a smaller number.

Under the proposed division, a town house might be located at one of a great many points, within easy access of the road and of the river bank. We are a boating community and every voter in town could readily reach a town house so located.

We ask you to be present, if possible at the hearing of our petition for division before the legislative committee and learn in great detail than it is possible to set forth in this pamphlet, our reasons and arguments for this petition, and of our efforts to so arrange matters that the remainder of the town may not be seriously inconvenienced.

Committee of Citizens of South Bristol and Christmas Cove
I. E. Tibbetts, Chairman



The first Board of Selectmen of South Bristol: (left to right) Wilbur Bearce, Frank B. Wells, and Robert M. Woodward. This photomontage was given to the town by Samuel A. Miles at the celebration held on August 30, 1918 at Centennial Hall to honor the new town. It now hangs in the meeting room of the new Town Hall.