

# South Bristol Historical Society

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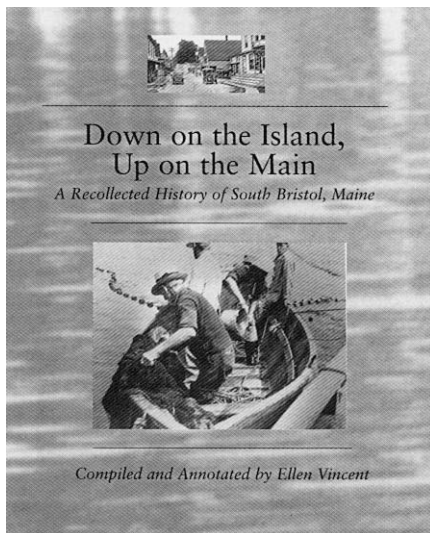
## Newsletter

South Bristol, Maine 04568

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### Historical Society News



#### Coming soon to South Bristol; “Down on the Island, Up on the Main” – The Book and the Show

A dream come true, Ellen Vincent's book of South Bristol oral history and pictures should be in bookstores, libraries and our own Historical Society museum by late May or early June. Two more generous grants, one from the Drukker Foundation and the other from the Mary McNally McFarland Fund of the Maine Community Foundation, were received in late fall and in January and, along with welcome gifts from individuals, brought us close to the \$30,000 original estimate for costs of publication. Then came more good news in January - a revised cost estimate from Tilbury House Publishers, one that is within reach without an additional major effort to raise funds. Ellen has been working on page proofs and other final details and by the time this reaches you, actual printing should be in motion.

**Where can you get your copy?** *Down on the Island, Up on the Main* will be available in bookstores for \$30 a copy, and Ellen will be doing lots of “Book Signings” during June to promote its sale in those outlets. SBHS will receive a percentage of the net proceeds from these sales, after deducting trade discounts and payment to Tilbury House to cover the costs of distribution such as advertising, warehousing, shipping and accounting. In addition,

SBHS will have copies for sale at events sponsored by SBHS and at the SBHS headquarters in the old Rutherford Library. Because there are no distribution costs for these books, SBHS will be able to offer *Down on the Island, Up on the Main* at a discount to its members. We hope that every family with a South Bristol connection will want to buy their copies from SBHS, and that having it available in bookstores and libraries will inspire people elsewhere in Maine and New England to become more interested in local history, especially oral history.

#### SBHS Museum – Adding to the collection and improving its management

We were delighted to receive the gift of a fine electric typewriter from Debbie and Ed Anderson; this particular typewriter was a big help in preparing grant applications for *Down on the Island, Up on the Main* and will continue to be useful with numerous small tasks around the museum that just can't be done on the computer. We received a number of postcards from the Boothbay Regional Historical Society to add to our files. Jean Case, who became a member after visiting the museum last fall, sent us a treasure trove of memorabilia saved by her mother, Muriel Farrin Carrall. Included are a wonderful high school class autograph book from 1929-32 with many familiar original signatures, postcards, photos, and clippings about South Bristol folks. Many thanks to all for thinking of SBHS.

As the SBHS museum collection grows, keeping accurate records of all the items increases in importance. We will soon have a software program which will enable us not only to keep the records, but also to find particular items or subjects with far greater ease. The key to this improvement, however, is the transfer of the data from paper to the computer. The data entry itself is not difficult: if you have any familiarity with even the simplest word processing program you can do it. If you could give even a few hours to help with this project, your time would be greatly appreciated. Just call Ellen Wells, 644-1584 for more information.

#### Other News

##### *Membership*

A special thank-you to Damon Kletzien and Lois Drukker who both recently became Life Members, and a warm

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welcome to new members Thomas Jeffries and Peter Hope and Judy Anderson.

### ***In Memoriam***

We note with sadness the passing of SBHS Member J. Douglas Thompson on October 29, 2002. Doug was born in 1916 to Sarah and Capt. Mark Thompson, whose launches (one named the J. Douglas, after Doug) carried passengers and the mail up and down the Damariscotta. Doug lived his boyhood on "Kid Hill," going to grade and high school at the island school, where he was a member of the boys' 1931 championship basketball team. As a long-time Maine teacher and high school principal, he always tried to return to South Bristol in the summer; at one time he and his first wife Jo had a gift shop next to Farrin's Store called the Ship's Lantern. He never lost his fondness for his home, and until his final illness he and his wife Pat still visited friends in South Bristol as often as they could. He was enthusiastic about South Bristol history, and had an encyclopedic recall of names, places and events. Many of his remembrances of growing up in SB appear in Ellen Vincent's forthcoming book. One of the first SBHS members, Doug also donated original paintings and other memorabilia to the Historical Society museum. Always a kind and gracious man, he dedicated his life to helping others.

### ***Fall Newsletter***

The SBHS newsletter will be better than ever if YOU contribute to it. If you have some fond memories of a family member who grew up in South Bristol, if someone in your family wrote a diary telling about life here, if you have an idea for an article on some aspect of our town's history, let us know. Don't hesitate if you feel a bit uncertain about actually doing all the writing yourself, we'll be glad to help. Please call Ellen Wells (644-1584) or Dave Andrews (644-8785). We start work on the next issue right away, with mailing date mid-October to mid-November.

## **Important Dates for 2003 – Mark your calendars now**

**April 26 (Saturday) 9:00 am** at the new Rutherford Library. Meet for coffee and pastry and a brief meeting including a review of the information we currently have about cemeteries in South Bristol, after which we will visit the King Colony Cemetery at the end of Sloop Nellie Road. We will bring along some gardening tools in case more work is needed to complete the clean-up that the Town of South Bristol is planning to start during the school recess week and will take note of any additional work that might need to be done.

**May 15 (Thursday) SBHS Meeting, 7:30 pm**, new Rutherford Library meeting room. "South Bristol in the 1940's" - Come and listen to and share stories of what it was like for the people living and working in South Bristol in the 40's - before, during and after WWII. Let's gather memories and make them part of our local tradition. Dave Andrews will be the moderator.

**June 19 (Thursday) SBHS meeting, 7:30 pm**, new Rutherford Library meeting room. Tentative program: "Lighthouse History" with special guests from three nearby lighthouse preservation groups. Watch the newspapers and look for posters around town.

**July 6 (Sunday) Thompson Ice House Ice Cream Festival.** SBHS again joins TIHPC for this favorite event. Ruthie Clark will be arranging for some interesting demonstrations.

**July 17 (Thursday) SBHS Annual Meeting, 7:00 pm**, Union Church hall. Officers and trustees will be elected at the business meeting, followed at 7:30 pm by special guest Tom Wilcox, Director of the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath. Our annual "Potluck Dessert" will conclude the meeting.

**August 2 –11. "Down on the Island, Up on the Main",** Ellen Vincent's show at the SB School gym/community center. Artist/author's reception on Sunday, August 3

**August 21 (Thursday) SBHS meeting, 7:30 pm**, new Rutherford Library meeting room. Tentative program: "Heron Island History – official and unofficial." Watch the newspapers and look for posters around town.

## More Excerpts from the “Autobiography of Kenneth Ormsby Mott-Smith,” published March, 1970

*Born in Hawaii in 1900, Kenneth Ormsby Mott-Smith made his first trip to Christmas Cove the summer of 1910, and then returned virtually every summer for the rest of his life. His daughter, Emily MacKenzie, is a life member of the SBHS and lives in South Bristol with her husband Dick. Numerous other Mott-Smith descendants continue to visit every summer. Our last newsletter left the Mott-Smith family standing on the steamboat wharf at Christmas Cove that first summer, having made the trip from Schenectady to Boston, Bath, and finally South Bristol (then still part of the town of Bristol) by train and steamboat.*

TWO DECKHANDS follow us up the gangplank to the pier, and thereon deposit from their dollies, our two trunks, last seen in Schenectady two days ago. We had expected Aunt Myra to meet us on the pier, but there is no Myra. ... Having been told, however, by Myra to look for “

Clifford's Cove,” my mother inquires how to get there and is directed to a saturnine individual, sitting in a launch nearby, who agrees to take us there, but instead of so doing, he takes us across the cove, leaving us to walk the rest of the way with our impedimenta, an act for which she never forgave him (that was “Captain” Bowman and his launch “Wetamo” of whom and of which we saw more later in the summer). We land at a float on a little island, on which stand a “Tea House and GiftShoppe”; walk across a long causeway to the mainland and up a stiff hill, turning left at a house called “The Wigwam” onto a road (the Christmas Cove-South Bristol Road) along which we walk quite a way, up hill and down, until on reaching a farm house (the Clifford farm house...now owned by Joseph & Peggy Yates Bruce ...[first house south of the Roderick Road/Westside Road intersection, ed.]) Our cottage, one of five in a row, owned by Mr. Young, a school teacher, is diagonally across the road and we are soon in there, unpacking. Single story; three medium size bedrooms, living room, kitchen with sink and cold water tap; coal or wood burning stove; outdoor privy. Certainly none too roomy nor too handsome. Yet, before the summer is out, it would house five adults plus four children. Ah youth!

Later that morning, ... we walk to South Bristol - then a pleasant walk to a thriving little village (the automobile having long since ruined both). On the left or West in the order named: barber shop and library (sharing one building); alley leading to steamship pier and public float, both in excellent condition; M.E. Thompson's grocery store, well stocked and with several clerks bustling around, with Mr. Thompson himself

keeping things humming from his chair beside the post office (consisting of counter, letter slot and a row of boxes) which is located near one corner of the store and wherein he is postmaster; livery stable housing Thompson horses and delivery wagons, and R.P. & E.M. Gamage's drug and hardware store; and finally the drawbridge spanning the Gut. On the East side: Miss L.R. Otis's dry goods store, D.G. Berry's shoddy grocery store - no match for Thompson's (as one might expect, he is a Democrat, Thompson, a Republican); Everitt Gamage's ice-cream parlor; and again the bridge. ...

.... At the south edge of the cove, opposite Mr. Young's float, was a sandy beach, and every day, sometimes several times a day, all or most of us would go bathing on the beach. Most of us simply splashed around, for the only member of the combined Mott-Smith/Thomas tribes who could really swim was our father. While he undoubtedly learned that art as a boy in Honolulu, it could hardly have been there that he learned to tolerate that icy water, by-product of the Labrador Current sweeping down the Maine Coast from the North Pole. (Never did I hear of anyone learning to swim in that water. I myself learned in a pool and so did my children). In all my years in Maine, I encountered only one male beyond the age of 40, other than my father, who really seemed to enjoy swimming in that icy water. (With their adipose tissues and lighter bones, the women, of course make better seals than do the men.)

It was an aquatic mode of life. Everything came and went by boat: rowboats (best in the world, they rowed easily yet could not be capsized), seaworthy launches, and the steamships: “Wiwurna” and “Nahanada,” - each once daily from Bath to Christmas Cove; “Newcastle,” from South Bristol and Christmas Cove to Newcastle-Damariscotta - two round trips daily; several trips daily

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**More Excerpts .....continued from previous page**

from South Bristol to Pemaquid Beach and Harbor and, weather permitting, Pemaquid Point; and weekly cargo ship "Enterprise" from Portland to South Bristol, loaded with goods for the various stores there.

Occasionally, the Mott-Smiths and Thomases combined with friends to hire a launch to take them places: to Pemaquid Point, landing at a public float (long since gone) at a rather exposed spot halfway down the point, followed by a 2+ mile walk through the woods to the Point, for a sandwich, stuffed egg, and thermos bottle picnic lunch on the tremendous rocks, with magnificent surf in the foreground, and Monhegan Island hull down on the horizon in the background, and finally, a visit with the lighthouse keeper (now the light is automatic) and inspection of the light house; or to East Boothbay for the beautiful three mile walk ...

So ends our first, memorable, aquatic summer. From arrival to departure, we have not seen a single automobile on Rutherford's Island. The few roads are fit only for horse-drawn vehicles, and the one hardy visitor who tried driving down from Damariscotta barely managed to make it by turning, here and there, into the fields in order to get off the road. Ah, those halcyon days!

The "Nahanada" takes us to Bath, the "City

of Bangor" from there to Boston, stopping, at the west entrance to the Kennebec, at Popham Beach, featuring an amusement park - a good place for that sort of thing in the summer time, but a mighty poor spot for a winter colony. (Yet the beach derives its name from George Popham, brother of the Chief Justice of England, who in the summer of 1607, led a group of 120 colonists there, sent from England by the Plymouth Company. The mildness of Indian Summer would seem to have deceived them as it was afterward to deceive the Plymouth settlers. Not surprisingly, many of the colonists, including George himself, died during the winter, and in the following spring, what was left of them returned to England.)

