

South Bristol Historical Society NEWSLETTER

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Established 1998

Spring 2021

South Bristol 1970s Digital Photo Collection Now Online

Over 250 photographs have been scanned and uploaded to the SBHS website. The photographs, taken by So. Bristol summer resident Ann Hillis in the 1970s, were donated to the SBHS by the photographer.

Hillis studied under Craig Stevens at the Maine Photographic Workshop in Rockport. The group of photographs was the result of an overnight assignment by Stevens for students to take pictures of people in their hometown and print them for class. With his encouragement, Ann continued taking pictures of the people of South Bristol at work and at leisure throughout 1976 and 1978.

Hillis said "I am most grateful to the people of South Bristol for letting me intrude upon their lives at all hours. This study is a record of how things were back then. It is in the nature of things to change. These pictures are of a moment in our illusion of time, a bit of modern history. I hope the townspeople enjoy seeing some old friends and remembering how things were not so long ago."



South Bristol photographs by Ann Hillis are available for viewing on the SBHS website



Schooner Lewis R French will moor in Christmas Cove June 26-27.
Capt. Wells will join SBHS for a Q&A at the CCIA Casino

Schooner Lewis R French Celebrates 150th

The schooner Lewis R. French was launched in South Bristol in 1871. This year marks her 150th birthday and to celebrate, the schooner will spend a few nights moored in Christmas Cove, offering visitors a chance to step aboard. In addition, Captain Garth Wells will be on hand for a special Q&A following a South Bristol Historical Society presentation about local 19th century shipbuilding.

Schooner LR French is the oldest working two-masted schooner in the country and designated a National Historic Landmark. Named after their father, who was part owner, the French brothers Joseph, John, and Sands all owned shares, along with John Farrar. Over the course of her long life, the 35-ton, 65-foot coasting schooner carried all manner of cargo including bricks, fish, granite, flour and corn, wood products, cannery supplies, and now passengers. She had been converted to a gas-powered boat in the 1920s and then back to a sailing vessel in the 1970s.

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SBHS BOARD MEMBERS

Co-Presidents – Larry Kelsey & Nancy Adams; Vice President – Wayne Eugley; Historian – Scott Farrin;

Secretary – Deb Storch; Treasurer – Betsy Graves;

*Trustees – Dave Andrews, Mary Avantaggio, Jason Bigonia, Wendy Jackson, Carol Kelsey
Carolyn McKeon, Mike Naylor, Jack Speranza, Warren Storch, Ellen Wells*

SBHS 2021 Programs

Please note that all events require COVID-19 precautions, masks and distancing.
Check our website for the most up-to-date information.

SBHS Museum will be open Saturdays starting May 29 through August 28, 1-4pm.
Roosevelt S Road School will be open Saturdays July and August 1-4pm

May 15, Sat 10AM—*Cemetery Walk at Harrington Cemetery*, Located at 278 Harrington Road, Bristol, the Harrington Cemetery dates back to 1787 and holds many individuals from South Bristol, Bristol, and Walpole. The adjacent 18th century Meeting House will be open to visitors as well.

June 27, Sun 3:30PM—*Schooner Lewis R French Celebrates 150 years*, Co-sponsored by the CCIA, this presentation on local 19th century shipbuilding by Dave Andrews will be held at the Casino, followed by a Q&A with schooner Captain Garth Wells.

July 14, Wed 6:30PM — *Annual General Meeting 7PM*, followed by *Display of Native American artifacts* from the collections of Todd Lincoln. Todd has a Native American heritage and is a life-long resident of South Bristol. His collection of artifacts is a result of his keen eye while hiking our coastal areas. At Union Church Parish Hall.

August 15-22 — *Lincoln County Pilgrimage* celebrates the *Maine Bicentennial* county-wide and in South Bristol at these locations: Old Walpole Meeting House, Walpole Chapel, Thompson Ice House, Roosevelt S Road Schoolhouse, SBHS Museum, and Union Church on Rutherford Island. See more info below.

Aug 18, Wed 7PM—*The hidden history in place-names and landscapes of South Bristol*. At Union Church Parish Hall with historians Jayne Gordon and David Andrews. This program will investigate surviving buildings, landscapes, and place-names to bring to light the past, hiding in plain sight.

Sep 8, Wed 7PM—*Annual South Bristol Themed Trivia* at Coveside Restaurant. Join us for an entertaining night where teams compete for prizes and go head-to-head in their knowledge of town history.

Oct 6, Wed 7PM—‘*Postcards from Gus*’ with Cathy Phillips Jewitt, Ben & John Meader. At Union Church Parish Hall. This program looks at how brothers Luther and Augustus (Gus) Phillips created important historical Maine imagery for future generations. Postcards from Gus: A modern travelogue through Maine’s past, with five episodes so far, can be seen online at www.sandboxatlas.org.



Lincoln County & Maine Bicentennial Reboot in 2021

Lincoln County Historical Association (LCHA), along with town historical societies, non-profit groups, and organizations are planning a Lincoln County Pilgrimage. Starting Sunday, Aug. 15th and running through Sunday, Aug. 22nd, the journey includes a special “Passport” log-book. This booklet will include a full listing of historical sites and events occurring throughout the week. “Pilgrims” are encouraged to get their Passports stamped at each site they visit.

South Bristol will participate each day by opening up to six sites for the Pilgrimage: (north to south) Old Walpole Meeting House, Walpole Chapel, Thompson Ice House, Roosevelt S Road School, Historical Society Museum, and the Union Church. Open hours may vary by site, and will be posted on our website as the date approaches.

There will also be press releases in the Lincoln County News leading up to the Pilgrimage. For more information visit Lincolncounty2020.com.

Lewis R. French

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In 1845 Lewis R. French purchased a house in Christmas Cove from widow Mrs. Francis Pierce. French and his wife Salome Elizabeth Farrar came from Lincolnville, Maine. Descendants of LR French still own property on French Lane today.

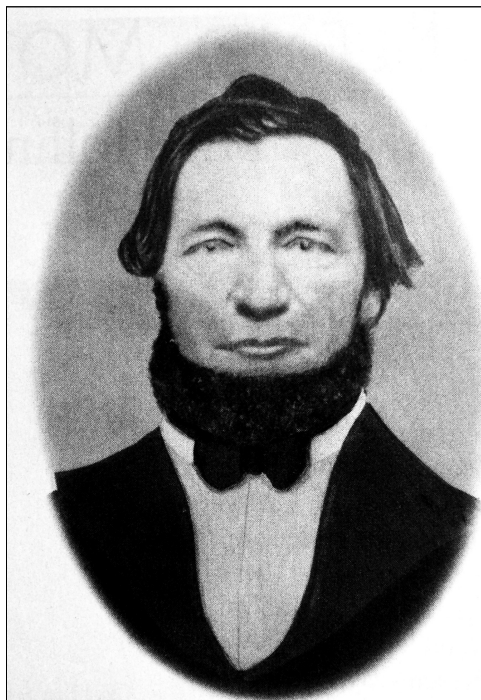
"In the 1880s John Farrar French, the middle son of Lewis and Salome, built a house in the field east of the cove, that was later moved to its present site along Route 129. After his mother died, the youngest son, Sands, inherited the French family house. It was not until the 1890's that the McFarlands arrived in this part of Christmas Cove. They came as a family unit from their ancestral plot on McFarlands Cove, first for the summer, then as permanent settlers. The Frenches sold them the land."

(From H. L. Warner's "A History of the Families and their Houses: South Bristol, Maine")

Schooner French has had three owner-captains since 1972 when Capt. John Foss rebuilt her as a windjammer. Next was Capt. Dan Pease in 1986 and then Capt. Garth Wells in 2004.

Happy birthday LR French and crew! We look forward to welcoming you back to So. Bristol.

LR French circa 1890



Lewis R. French, So. Bristol Merchant



Another Serious Ocean Disaster.

THE SCHOONER L. R. FRENCH NEARLY WRECKED.

The schooner L. R. French, on her last voyage to this port, had a very narrow escape from being lost, together with her large and valuable cargo of corn, flour, sugar, molasses, and other freight, largely for Brown, the Elm street grocery man. Below decks she was filled to her utmost capacity, and had a deck load of some ninety barrels of that noted "La Rose Blanche" flour, for Brown. The French left Portland lower roads early Saturday morning, under full sail, soon after, getting into the heavy seas of the late easterly storm, the jib sheet parted. The captain immediately hove to, getting into the trough of the sea, when she became quite unmanageable, the heavy seas boarding her every moment, nearly swamping her.

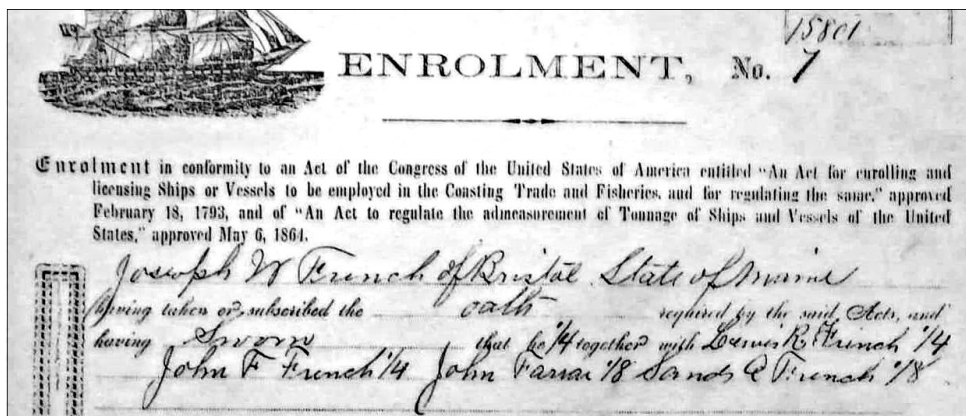
The captain was at first tempted to throw the flour overboard to save the vessel and balance of the cargo, but probably thinking of the low prices at which it had been bought, and that there were many poor people who needed the low prices Brown would undoubtedly make, desisted from the act. One more tremendous sea boarding her, it seemed inevitable she must go down under the heavy burden, but the gallant craft gave a quiver from stem to stern and then proudly reared herself above the foaming wave, and was safe, soon running in under shelter of a neighboring island in safety.

The French arrived in Damariscotta, Nov. 14th. The flour was discharged and was at first expected to be badly damaged, but on examination the damage was found to be very slight—some of the very worst having only about one pound of wet flour in a barrel, and others not wet a particle.

Lincoln County News, Nov. 20, 1879

..FISHING NEWS.—The fishermen report fish quite plenty. For the last few weeks the weather has been rather unfavorable for fishing generally.—The lobster fishing is still carried on as it was in the winter and early spring. Not only the fishermen but also many farmers and mechanics are engaged in it.—A. M. Gamage & Co. are building seine boats for the firm of Foote, Fowler & Co. These, I think, are the first boats of this kind that have ever been built in Bristol.—The alewives are now coming along quite plenty, and seeing the nets and weirs that are prepared to catch them, one would conclude that the unfortunate fish would have a hard time to find their way up river. These fish have been selling, fresh, for fifty cents a hundred, and will probably be sold less than that before the season is over. This is a good opportunity for the fishermen to get their fresh bait for spring fishing.

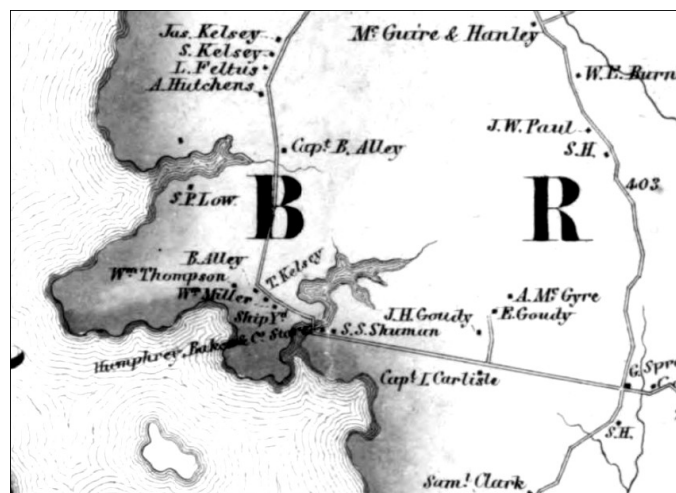
Herald & Record, May 9, 1878



George Kelsey Homestead—Historic House Highlight



The original George Kelsey house in Clarks Cove
Photo courtesy of Tracy Leeman Verney



Clarks Cove in 1857
Note the shipyard & store south and west of the Mill Pond

Passing through the quiet and picturesque neighborhood of Clarks Cove in Walpole, one can hardly imagine this was once a thriving center of industry over 150 years ago. There had been farms, a grist mill, shipbuilding, brick-making, and ice-harvesting from the Mill Pond.

The Kelsey family has deep roots in Clarks Cove. William and Moses Kelsey came to the area from Londonderry NH and purchased the John Kent homestead in the 1770's. This land had been deeded to Kent in 1746 from Shem Drowne, the agent for the "Proprietors of the Pemaquid Patent". William's son, William Jr. married Esther Wentworth and had many children including prominent shipbuilder, Samuel Kelsey.

Samuel ran a productive mid-19th century shipyard, building more schooners during this period than any other Bristol builder, ranging from 80-200 tons and higher. The largest was "Highland Light", a ship of 670 tons, launched in 1855. The actual location of the Kelsey yard might have been in Clarks Cove or farther north on the east side of the Damariscotta River.

Samuel's brother Thomas was the father of George D. Kelsey. George married Emaline Gamage in 1863. They built a single story cape style house and had seven children. George is listed as a ship carpenter in the 1870 census.

George's son Everett P. Kelsey married Laura Edna Somes in 1894 and had four children. Everett raised the roof on the house in 1907 to two stories to accommodate the boarding of workers of the Bristol Ice Company as well as summer vacationers. "The Anchorage" hosted up to

sixteen boarders in the house and rented 3 cottages, into the 1940s, charging \$100 per person per month, including all meals. Everett had a sawmill, vegetable gardens, kept animals, shoed horses, and lobstered in the River.

Both Everett and his son Norman were fine masons. Everett built the beautiful stone walls around the cemetery at Wentworth Point and Norm built the large center fireplace at Gilbert's Lobster Pound.

Everett and Laura Edna sold the house in 1953 to Edward and Julia Myers. Their son Allen recalls "at least two families who showed up when the Myerses first lived at Clarks Cove were wanting, to the point of tears, to rent a cottage; willing to pay almost anything to stay in places that had so many happy memories for them."



Everett Kelsey house "The Anchorage"
The 2nd story was added to accomodate boarders
Photo courtesy of Allen Myers

Memories of The Anchorage

By Carolyn Edna Kelsey

Daughter of Norman and Helen (Gilbert) Kelsey & granddaughter of Everett and Laura Edna Kelsey
May 2007

Grampa and I, Remembrances

Milking Bessie
Gathering fruit
Picking blueberries
Eating horehound drops and drinking Moxie
Hauling lobster traps
Calling Bessie to come in
Feeding cows, chickens, pigs and barn cats
Haying
Riding in his "Nash Rambler"
Waiting for water to boil, running to gather corn, hurrying to shuck it.
Listening to Lowell Thomas at 6:45
Rubbing his bald head so hair would grow
Watching this sitting in his lap, sucking thumb, in mirrored stand in front of philco radio. Mesmerizing.
Putting milk in separator
Pouring milk in bottles, putting on paper caps. Setting them in six slot metal bottle carrier.
Gathering money from jar that customers left him before
Talking to the Grampa with Alzheimer's
Laughing together



Everett and Laura Edna Kelsey, married 1894

Grammie and I, Remembrances

Churning butter
Pinning curtains on the needle of frame
Gathering cloths from the cloths line
Sleeping in her feather bed
Washing floors with milk to make them shine
Grammie making me dresses and grain bag skirts
Picking out colors for quilts
Learning to sew
Laughing together
Leaving boxes of cloths and quilts beside mailboxes
Talking about her childhood
Talking about meeting Grampa
Talking about her loving me
Sitting, rocking, talking on the back porch



Everett & Laura Edna Kelsey, 57th wedding anniversary in 1951

Photos and text courtesy of Tracy Leeman Verney

South Bristol Historical Society

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South Bristol Historical Society

HELP US BUILD OUR MEMBERSHIP

Join online: southbristolhistoricalsociety.org

or send a check by mail to:

SBHS, PO Box 229, South Bristol, ME 04568

Individual	\$10
Family	\$20
Sustaining	\$40
Individual Life	\$250
Family Life	\$350



Nellie Frey

Nellie Frey's husband, Charles, served as village postmaster for almost 30 years starting in 1949. The post office was located in the small building across the road from Farrin's Store, now Osier's Wharf.

Did you know....?

The first post office for all of Bristol was in Walpole in 1800. It was at Thomas McClure's trading post on the Damariscotta River, opposite the Walpole Meeting House.