

# South Bristol Historical Society

Est. 1998

## Newsletter

South Bristol, Maine 04568

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### Historical Society News

#### S Road School Restoration Update

The June 16th Reunion at the schoolhouse exceeded expectations as a glorious beginning to the S Road School Restoration project. Twelve former students were on hand, along with some fifty interested SBHS members and friends. Old stories were re-told as friends remembered school days in the 1930's and much information was provided about the appearance of the schoolroom and its furnishings, information that is essential to the planned restoration of the school to its 1930's appearance and use.

Not long after the Reunion, a lease for SBHS use of the schoolhouse property was signed with the Town under the same terms as the existing lease between SBHS and the Town for use of the old Rutherford Library building. Then further close examination of the school by local contractor Kenneth Lincoln, with reference to the outline of restoration work provided in 2005 by Les Fossel of Restoration Resources, yielded an updated list of tasks to be performed and a new cost estimate.

At the Annual Meeting in July, after consideration of the financial condition of the Society, members voted to approve the Trustees' recommendation to pledge \$10,000 from the SBHS treasury to the S Road School Restoration Fund. Such a commitment was made possible because of the proceeds of sale of our two extraordinary books, Ellen Vincent's *Down on the Island, Up on the Main*, and H. Landon Warner's *The Families and their Houses: South Bristol, Maine*.

In the weeks that followed, a timetable for various fund-raising activities was prepared, and the S Road School Restoration Committee was formed. SBHS is honored and pleased to announce the members of that Committee:

*Leading the "want" list for the S Road School are student desks similar to the one pictured here. Thanks to the Francis Faust family, Marguerite Kornabrens, and Ann Weiss, we now have four desks. If any reader knows where to find one, please let SBHS know.*



Chairman, Donna F. Plummer; Honorary Co-Chairman, Norman A. Hamlin; members Lois C. Drukker, Bruce A. Farrin, Jr., Ramona Thompson Gaudette, Betsy Cable Graves, Linda B. Johnson, Margaret Macy-Peterson, Judith Manchester, Alden McFarland, Katherine Poole Norwood, Amy Rice Poole, Ann M. Sears, and Grant W. Wheeler. The support and advice of these individuals who represent many segments of our community will be invaluable in the effort to gather the resources for this project. Be on the lookout next spring for a letter from the Committee, complete with a full explanation of the project and a pledge envelope for your contribution.

#### Special Bulletin – Another Gift from Ellen Vincent

Those of you who were not able to attend the August meeting at the Walpole Meeting House may not know that a bequest of \$10,000 from the estate of **Ellen Vincent**, artist, teacher, and author, has been received by SBHS. The Historical Society has already received so many gifts from Ellen – her help and inspiration at the time the organization came into being, her guidance as it grew, the incredible resource represented by her exhibit and book *Down on the Island, Up on the Main*. Words are inadequate to express the importance of her contributions and the gratitude felt by everyone who supports SBHS and its mission.

#### Winter afternoons will be Wednesday afternoons this year

For three winters now, a number of SBHS members have gathered at the SBHS museum/research center for a once-a-week work session. This year **Wednesday** will be the day, from 1 to 3 pm at SBHS. An exciting new project faces us this winter: Ellen Vincent's South Bristol files have been entrusted to SBHS – a treasure trove of photos, negatives, tapes of her interviews, letters, and other writings. Now it is up to us to inventory and conserve all this material. Please join us – no prior experience or reservations needed! It is a very informal group and everyone is welcome whether for one hour or two, one day or for many. No session will be held on November 21, or on December 19 through January 2.

#### Membership Notes

Sincere thanks to our new Life Members **George** and **Judy Manchester** for their most welcome support. Many thanks as well to our 28 Sustaining Members and to all our members – more than 250 of you as represented by 150

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individual and family memberships. **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 2007-2008 year.** For your convenience, there is a membership renewal form on the back page of this newsletter.

Members support SBHS in many ways, some of which are not always noticed. To name just a few, **Bill Kelsey** made sure the lawn was kept mowed; **Michele Yates** provided and planted the attractive window boxes; **John Rounds** not only monitored the open hours every Wednesday, but also made our one and only glass display case usable again by fitting it out with rollers; **Donna Plummer, Cotton Damon,** and **Michele Christensen** led the work crew that cleaned up the S Road School for the Reunion; **Cynthia Garrels** was on hand every summer Sunday afternoon and spent countless hours entering data into our museum catalogue program; **Ruth Walker**, a summer neighbor, did a major clean-up of the unsightly weeds in our front yard; **Cynthia Garrels, Carolyn McKeon, Donna Plummer, Gail Seiders, Genie Cole, Janet Claar** and others made sure we had refreshments after our meetings; an energetic work crew including **Dave Andrews, Gordon Claar, Nat Hammond, Cotton Damon** and **Stan Wells** repaired and repainted the walls and ceiling damaged by a leaky roof.

### **SBHS Collection Keeps Growing**

Here are a few of the treasures received recently: a video tape made by **Earl and Dot Wright** including footage of TV interviews with Harvey Gamage and home movies of the launch of the *Clearwater*; genealogies of the Gamage family and numerous photos of family members from **Alvin Gamage** along with the wonderful panoramic view of the

Gut which appeared in our Fall 2006 Newsletter; a notebook prepared by **Nathan and Judith Cantwell** filled with early photos, postcards and other memorabilia about Heron Island and the McClave family; a typed transcription of the first volume of the “Hunter Family Journal” and a photocopy of the Journal’s continuation to March 1864, thanks to **Chuckie Blaney**; a “ship in a bottle” mounted on a board on which is inscribed “C. W. Stevens, S. Bristol, Maine 1923” donated by **Mark Lowell**; **Kate Beaudette** entrusted to SBHS the original sign which hung above the entry to Larry Chittenden’s lending library at his home on Christmas Cove from 1928 until his death in the later 30’s, reading “Larry’s Autograph Library - open 10 to 12 noon - weekdays only”; the **Boothbay Region Historical Society** forwarded to SBHS a group of negatives and prints of Gamage shipyard launchings and a postcard signed and mailed by Larry Chittenden in 1923 with his Christmas Cove poem on the front. SBHS is very grateful for each donation, whether a document, an artifact, a photo, or a tape: each one helps preserve the story of South Bristol and makes it more available to the community. We can scan family photos and documents, then return them to you. Remember SBHS when you clean out your file cabinet or attic!

### **Election of Officers and Trustees**

Members in attendance at the Annual Meeting on July 19 re-elected officers **Ellen Wells, Nat Hammond, Michele Christensen, Cotton Damon,** and **David Andrews.** A new Trustee, **Charles Plummer,** was elected to a three-year term, as were Trustees **Eugenie Cole** and **Bill Kelsey.** Continuing as Trustees are **Gail Seiders, Larry Kelsey, Gordon Claar, Carolyn McKeon** and **Donna Plummer.**

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## **Memoirs - South Bristol, Maine - World War II**

**Rosamond Cook Becker** spent most of her childhood summers, starting in the early 1930’s, on Shipyard Road (then known as Point Road). Her grandparents, the Rev. Thomas and Flora Horner, owned the house opposite the Gamage Boatyard, now owned by the Avantaggios. What follows are excerpts from memoirs written by Roz in 2006 and given to SBHS this summer. Roz also donated some wonderful photos and copies of a journal kept by her grandmother Horner while in South Bristol the summer of 1915.

### **Getting There**

**T**he summer of ‘42 was the first year of World War II. In South Bristol, Maine the summer people disappeared and the cottages on the Point Road were closed beyond Herman Kelsey’s and the Cooks in the woods above.

Even our little family had been making plans to stay in Cincinnati and join camp groups or take courses in the city. Then my father decided to arrange a trip to Maine so we could stay in the cottage there and continue our summers as before. However, Maine had changed and our experience was quite different than when we had gone to Christmas Cove to swim in the saltwater pool, take boat

trips to Boothbay Harbor or have many cottages and family homes to visit.

It was a long trip by bus that year. Gas was rationed and buses broke down. Especially difficult was getting from the station in Newcastle/Damariscotta to South Bristol 14 miles beyond. Eventually we had to hire a car. Services were limited and with gas rationing there were few resources. Once there that summer, we relied on the local people for our food and other necessities. We had permission to haul drinking water from a closed cottage and utility water from a well in the woods belonging to other summer people who were not there. We had to have wood for the fireplace,

as well. Looking back, my father must have done a lot of negotiating to set it up for us. Our household consisted of our staunch, strong, housekeeper, Edith, and my sister, Katharine known as "Tatto", and myself. Our cousin, Connie from NH, stayed with us for a period in the middle of the summer.

I was 11 the first summer of the War. We had arranged to use a cousin's row boat and I began to fish in the harbor. I even learned how to clean the rock cod. I can't remember if I actually ate any of them. As usual, we had blueberries on the hill toward Mahon's and Edith always made a pie if we picked enough. She baked them on a slow kerosene stove. We had them plain or on cereal. I picked fir balsam in the woods and made small pillows with scraps of fabric left in the cottage. We gave plays for the neighbors that were in my "Children's Play Mate" magazine.

Saturday nights I spent at the Gamage's with my friend, Dotty. Her large family went into Damariscotta once a week to shop and sometimes go to a movie so Dotty and I babysat at her house with her baby brother. We played board and card games until time for me to go home. The South Bristol Library was well stocked and I began borrowing books and reading. During the week, evenings were often spent playing Monopoly, Horse Racing, Pit, and the other standard games young people have enjoyed over the years. Occasionally we picnicked in the evening. We walked over to McFarland's Cove on the other side of South Bristol and brought hot dogs, marshmallows and little canned heat tins to cook over. We swam when the tide was right. It was

usually cold at that hour but we loved it and the water was relatively shallow over large rocks. Our little party trekked home at dusk where Edith lit the kerosene lamps and sometimes lit a fire.

As usual, the summers were warm and beautiful. Rainy spells were an opportunity to settle in and read or do hobbies. After the rains the woods smelled of pine and bayberries. We spent much time in the woods collecting stones or following paths to interesting spots overlooking the water. Somehow we always had things to do. We swam every day at whichever location had the highest tide. When it was halfway out, we swam off the cold rocks overlooking East Boothbay. The water was deep and cold and Edith sat knitting on the rocks while we shivered and turned blue having a wonderful time swishing about in the sea. Although she couldn't swim, she called us back when we swam too far out and when we looked too cold, she called us in. When the tide was high we splashed and swam right off shore in the inlets like at Elliot Leeman's, again using the property of others' which was then open to all.

## Shipyard

Harvey Gamage's Shipyard was half way down our road. Before the war we sometimes swam off his pier where he made mostly small craft. With the war, the government contracted for him to make wooden mine sweepers and sent an array of experts and professionals to implement the production. The yard was surrounded with wire fence

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### Join the South Bristol Historical Society

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Please print*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Winter Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Winter phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Summer phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

#### Membership Categories: Please check one

##### Annual

Individual \$10.00 ☐

Couple/family \$20.00 ☐

Sustaining (Individual or Couple/family) \$40.00 ☐

Contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_ ☐

##### Life

Individual \$250.00 ☐

Couple/family \$350.00 ☐

Please mail form and check to: SBHS, PO Box 229, South Bristol, ME 04568

ing and a guard house set up at the entrance with armed guards. The work whistle blew at 7:00 AM and at noon for lunch. Workers quit at the 4:00 PM whistle. My friend, Dotty, was Harvey's middle daughter and she made rounds every morning selling candy bars, milk, and soda for the workers. As her friend, I accompanied her many times. We walked along the upper planking above the hulls making the snacks available without them having to leave their stations. Apparently I was not considered a risk to the security of the boatyard. The facility expanded with piers and launching tracks as well as massive buildings in which the ships were built year round.

## Spotting

One of the fringe benefits of my friendship with Dotty was joining her in being a plane and boat spotter in 1942. There was a lookout house on the Middle Road and we put in 2-hour shifts there (or 4, I can't

remember for sure), logging in all visible boats going by and their direction. If a plane went over head we rang up Portland describing it and the number of engines. This 24-hour coverage was practiced all along the coast and was considered an important defense in the early days of the war. I have a government certificate to show for it. Coming from Cincinnati where we bought war stamps and raised money for the USO, this brought me much closer to the realities of potential "invasion."



*This Eastern Illustrated postcard (circa 1913) shows the Horner (now Avantaggio) house on the left, the Horner boathouse on the right. The houses in the background are on Rte. 129 and the boathouse can now be seen on Sunset Loop.*