



# OLD BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

An Occasional Newsletter of the Society - Fall 2012

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## **Presidents' Remarks to the Membership of the Old Bristol Historical Society**

A busy season is behind us and the 2013 year is beginning to take shape. To start off the 2012 season, an annual cleanup morning was reinstated with about a dozen showing up to do the best we could for our "home", the precious McKinley School (1856) and its' grounds. Our Open Houses on 2nd Sunday afternoons brought by some welcome visitors. Best attended was the one for which Craig Elliott showed his early American artifacts from this area. Our varied programs on Sunday evenings were fascinating and drew regular enthusiasts as well as a range of attendees, depending upon the topic.

Map work by Kenneth Coombs and Rose Marie Ballard on the Historical Resource Surveys for Round Pond and Bristol Mills continues. We as a board also continue to look for meaningful ways to work with our schools to help interest and inspire our young people in Old Bristol's rich local history.

Welcome income of about \$1,200 from our early summer fundraiser, an Antiques and Curios Sale, is helping toward our operating costs for such necessities as electricity, insurance, minor repairs, newsletter printing and postage. Our total savings are currently \$2,656. The Directors mull the challenges ahead in maintaining an old building and deciding whether to undertake some major renovations to mend inadequacies related to exterior painting, access, insulation, water supply, plumbing, and heating.

We were most fortunate at our July Annual Meeting to have elected to our Board of Directors the following: Robert Ives, David Kolodin, and Mollie Perley. With their experience and revitalizing vision we strive to move forward in ways that will enhance our society's goal of collecting, preserving, and sharing the history of the town of Bristol for the public. We thank Bronwen Lane for her vital service as our Secretary during the past year. At this time we're looking for Nominating Committee members to find replacements for several officers and board members who have had to leave the board or will be retiring in July 2013.

And so, members and friends, a hearty thank you to those of you who are supporting us with your ideas for our future, donations of time and energy, attendance at programs and events, and your overall interest. Each and every one of you counts.

With wishes for a memorable holiday season!  
Pete and Kay Hannah



Board Members from left to right: David Kolodin, Pete Hope, Dan Purdy, Kathy Wright (treasurer), Robert McLaughlin, Ken Coombs, Mollie Perley (acting secretary), Kay and Pete Hannah (co-presidents). Missing from photo: Carol Brightman, Robert Ives, Lee Rushmore, Wayne and Marilyn Chadwick.

### **Special Thanks**

Beyond our officers and board members, program presenters, and event and activity contributors to whom the society is indebted for the important roles they play, we'd also like to thank the following:

\*Laura Stubbs for displaying the American flag and a holiday wreath on McKinley Sch.

\*Wayne Chadwick who faithfully keeps our school grounds mowed

\*Neighbors and friends who helped the board with cleaning and small repairs

\*Phil Averill for some clapboard repair on school's gable and examining interior ceiling

\*Buddy Crooker for exploring possibility for a well on school site

\*Peter MacCready for exploring possibility of a septic system on school site

\*Madeline Hobbs who provided refreshments for our programs

\*Walt Johansson for consultation re: ideas for building improvements

\*All those who gave hours and/or significant antique & curio donations for our fundraiser:

- Jean Andersen, Cathy Chase, Ken Coombs, Suzy Collins, Midge Coleman,

- Mike Cheney, Ron Gilzean, Paula Hanson, Larry Hayter, Madeline Hobbs,

- Peter Hope, Mark & Kim Jespersen, Mollie Perley, Dan Purdy,

- Al & Jeanne & Rottner, Laura Stubbs, Alexandra Wilson, Barbara Youtz,

\*Kathy Wright for providing a meeting location; a site and *many* items for our fundraiser

\*Joyce Brown for a copy of the 1887 certificate of Jennie Couillard to teach in Bristol

\*Margaret Wallace for a late 1800s photo album of Louds Island residents (unidentified)

\*Carol & Paul Ring for formatting, editing and printing our newsletters

\*Jeanne Rottner for mailing our many newsletters to members and friends

We apologize if we have omitted any names, but we still appreciate your contribution.

## **Building Committee Report**

When OBHS was created in 2003, we were fortunate to receive as a gift from the Neighborly Club the old McKinley Schoolhouse. The building, which is an outstanding example of a Maine one-room schoolhouse (and associated outhouse), served residents of the Pemaquid area as their elementary school for many years; and a number of OBHS's current members attended school there. Since the gift was received, the McKinley Schoolhouse has served as the OBHS's headquarters; and the Board has received many comments from members about their love for the building and their willingness to support its maintenance and improvement.

For the past several months the Building Committee has been evaluating the condition of the building with a view towards determining the costs of making repairs to the structure and upgrading it to insure that it can continue to serve the needs of the society in the years to come. The Committee plans to conclude the ongoing work of receiving repair and upgrade estimates in the hopes of initiating a fundraising campaign prior to the beginning of next summer's season.

Building Committee:  
Robert McLaughlin, Pete Hannah,  
Dan Purdy, Alexandra Jansen

## **The Bristol Town Houses**

by Peter Hope

The town of Bristol was incorporated in 1765 and originally encompassed the present day Bristol, South Bristol, and much of Damariscotta. Because of a mistake in the boundary, Bremen wasn't included until the next year. For over thirty years town meetings were held at homes and other buildings in various locations in town.

The first town meeting was held in 1765 at William Sproul's Inn, located on a bridle path at the head of the East Branch of John's Bay. This bridle path started in New Harbor near Dee's Variety Store, went up the present Rt. 130 and Harrington Road to the present Rt. 129, and then north to Damariscotta and became the first town road.

Town records verify the history of the various town houses of Bristol, all located on the same property in Bristol Mills, the most central location in town and the site where the present town hall now stands.

In July, 1797 it was voted at the town meeting to build a town house to hold the meetings. Elisha Clark gave "free of cost" to the town the brow of his saw mill for this purpose. John Bugbee was contracted to build the house for \$295 in accordance with plans presented at the meeting. [continued on the next page]

He completed the building in 1799, not 1800 as posted over the door of the present building. John Johnston in his book, "A History of Bristol and Bremen," states that the town house was not finished on the inside. The competence of Mr. Bugbee, the builder, could be questioned because by the 1820's the town was asked to appropriate money for repairs.

In April, 1838, "... it was decided to build a new town house on the spot where the old one now stands." On April 22, 1839 the town voted to raise \$500 to build it. At the next town meeting that year it was voted "...that the selectmen be a committee to procure a plan...and receive sealed bids for building the same." John Bearce, a boat builder in town, was awarded the contract. That building was completed before September, 1840 and the town voted to "... pay John Bearce the \$286.50 as the balance due him." Bearce also requested \$15 extra to build a chimney and install a stove. The total cost to the town was over \$500.



Main Street Bristol, ME 66  
Postcard belonging to Gordon Fossett

The previous photo shows a long rectangular building with a gable end roof configuration. A store is to the left and rear of the Town House with the gable facing Upper Round Pond Road. Because the postcard shows an automobile near the flagpole, it can be identified as an early 1900's photo.

By the 20th century the town had apparently outgrown the aging 1840 town house. Articles to build a new town hall were considered at two town meetings but were voted down. In 1912, Article 48 of the town warrant reads "...to see if the town will vote to enlarge and repair the town house..." The article passed and \$2000 was appropriated. The town report of 1913 shows that the town spend \$2793.97 on the project, a cost overrun of \$793.97. This project created the present town hall.

In comparing the present town hall to the one in the photo of that built in 1840, it can be seen that the enlargement and renovation of 1912 created a new town hall. The sign over the front door, BRISTOL TOWN HOUSE 1800, doesn't reflect historical accuracy. The Board of Directors of the Old Bristol Historical Society has suggested to the Board of Selectmen that the current sign above the Town House door be replaced to reflect that it is instead the *site* of the original Town House of 1799 and that the present Town House was built in 1912. It could more accurately read, "Site of Original Town House, 1799 - Rebuilt 1912"

## Programs & Fundraising

Our 2012 programs, always free to the public, were well-received, from the very local themes, such as Dick Hood's talk about the Pemaquid Trail community and Peter Hope's discussion on Round Pond and Louds Island, to ones with the far reaching implications of the War of 1812, as presented by Portland author, George Daughan. We were fortunate to have Calvin Dodge speak to us about shipbuilding in Damariscotta and David Andrews of South Bristol to enlighten us about Bristol's role in the Civil War.

We look forward to several new programs already on the agenda for 2013: Kent Wilkinson's talk about the days of steamships and hotels in Pemaquid Harbor with history to the present day (July 28); Bobby Ives speaking about Muscongus Bay island history and highlights; Kevin Johnson, photo archivist for the Penobscot Museum in Searsport presenting information about the database of photos at the museum and a slide show of old photos of the Bristol area with audience interaction. Plans are developing for another "Paddle Through History with Walt and Nancy Johansson on the Tidal Pemaquid River" this summer.

Although we haven't made a decision regarding a major fundraiser for next summer, we do plan to print for sale some of Bristol's fascinating old postcards and possibly a calendar of old photos. We also hope to coordinate a trunk sale to benefit OBHS with the Lion's Trunk Sale and so ask that members and friends save us appropriate items.

### Membership Special Offer till Jan. 1

In order to encourage prompt response for membership and dues payment **we are reducing the rate for membership** from \$15.00 per family and \$10 for single membership to \$10.00 per family and \$7.00 for single **if paid before Jan. 1, 2013**. The rates after Jan. 1 will revert to the regular rate on the form. Please be sure to put the date in the upper right of the form. We'd be grateful if you would care to share your ideas regarding potential speakers, events, or fundraisers with any board member or write them on the back of your returned membership slip in this newsletter. Thank you for your support of the Old Bristol Historical Society!

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2013 OLD BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION      New \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_      Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (Only need to fill in following info. if new member or changes.)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Seasonal Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ or Phone \_\_\_\_\_ (dates \_\_\_\_\_)

Thank you for sending dues of \$10 Single or \$15 Family made out to: Old Bristol Historical Society  
P. O. Box 87  
Bristol, ME 04539

Tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code  
Please remember that our continued efforts depend upon your generous support.