



OLD BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Biannual Newsletter of the Society – Fall 2021

A Message From Our President

In October, I had the good fortune to go on a boat trip around New Harbor and Back Cove. The Old Bristol Historical Society has been photographing not only all the barns in Bristol, but also all the fish houses. This fish house journey had five members in our center console boat: Eric Lax as captain, Karen Sulzberger as mate, Brian Sawyer and Steve Hope as long-time lobster fishermen, and I. While Eric and Karen handled the boat, I took notes and pictures, and Steve and Brian regaled us with the history of the 45 fish houses that are nestled into the waterfront and onto the hillside of both of these harbors. It was a remarkable and truly delightful time.



I share this little episode because it represents the essence of OBHS, and what we are doing on behalf of our community. Although much of our time and efforts right now are devoted to the rebuilding of the historic Pemaquid Falls Mill, creating our new Bristol History Center, and establishing a new park for our community, the heart and soul of our mission steadily continues by collecting, preserving, and sharing the history of our beloved town. It is this history which helps us to remember how life has been, so that we can live the “way life should be.”

It is for that reason that we at OBHS make three important requests of you all at this time through this Newsletter.

Firstly, if any of you would like to volunteer for the OBHS and help us with our historic Mill, Bristol History Center, or new town park, we would be deeply grateful to have you join this growing community of volunteer workers. No special skills are required!

Secondly, if you have or if you know of anyone who has historic materials, artifacts, or photos, we would love to know about them so that we can offer to preserve them in our new archival vault, or digital library for all to enjoy and learn from.

Lastly, we are on our **Final Push** to get to our goal of \$250,000 dollars for our 2020-2021 Campaign. At the present time, we have only \$19,000 to go. This is our **Last Appeal**, and if any of you would be willing to give us that little, extra push we would be thrilled to finally fulfill our hopes, dreams, and visions of creating our wonderful new Bristol History Campus for our community, our children, and our children's children. Our deepest thanks for any help you can give.

Blessings,

Bob Ives
President of OBHS



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The Ship *Angel Gabriel*, an Epilog

by Warren Riess

Twenty years ago, I wrote *Angel Gabriel, The Elusive English Galleon* and now Bobby Ives says it's time for me to bring people up to date.

Angel Gabriel, built in 1617 for Sir Walter Raleigh's vice admiral, started its career as a heavily armed exploration ship, then continued as a Bristol, England merchantman. The ship served eighteen hard years in the North Atlantic. It was well-worn in the summer of 1635 as it delivered supplies and passengers to New England when the Great New England Hurricane struck. Reverend Richard Mather wrote at the time, "And the *Angel Gabriel*, being then at anchor at Pemaquid, was burst in pieces and cast away."

I searched for the ship in the late 1970s and in 1980 submitted my master's thesis about the ship's history, a bit about each of the known passengers, and our first two attempts to find the ship's remains. For years after that, people kept asking for copies of my thesis and one of those people even tried to publish it, word-for-word, as his own work.

In all I sent out thirty-seven copies. For each I spent much time in front of one of the old photocopiers, going to the post office, etc. When I refused to do it anymore, my wife Kathleen picked up the ball, then encouraged me to bring it up to date, write it again for the general public instead of for four professors, and have Lincoln County Press print a few hundred copies.

One of the reasons we published the book was I hoped it would be read by some people who had more information. In my research in the US and overseas, I'd found information about some of the people aboard the

ship, but never found a crew or passenger list. It appeared that no museum had knowledge of any artifacts saved from the wreck. Surely there were people out there who had documents and artifacts that I had not seen. The book might prompt them to come forward.

Well, the book took off faster than we thought. There were over a hundred sales before it was printed, and it even was the best seller for one week that December at the Maine Coast Bookstore in Damariscotta. Sales slowed down during the following months, but to date we have sold about 2,800 copies directly by mail and through local retailers.

We have assumed the books were mostly purchased by descendants of the people who survived the shipwreck, but no one has offered a single bit of data or artifacts about the ship, except for a horsehair-covered trunk. One can see the trunk at the Colonial Pemaquid Park Museum. Cogswell family lore identifies it as belonging to passenger John Cogswell and saved from the shipwreck.

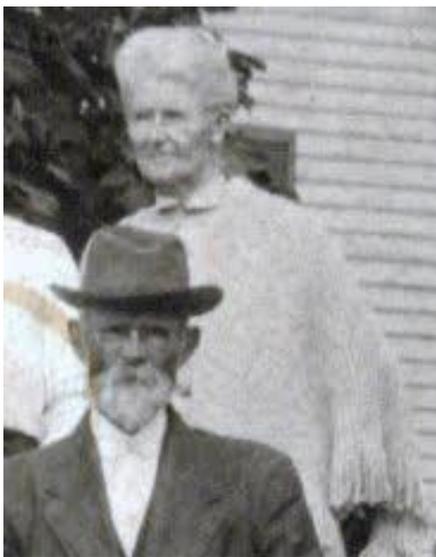
I stopped looking for the ship's remains in the 1990s, and then two of my graduate students asked if they could pick up the ball. They gathered some other students and friends and spent a few days each of two summers, but then jobs elsewhere and raising families took priority. Nothing much happened after that until Tom Desjardin, then Director of the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, took an interest. Tom talked the NOAA ocean bottom mapping team into sweeping the inner and outer Pemaquid Harbor with multi-beam sonar while they were mapping the coast nearby—but as expected, that showed nothing more than what we had found in the 1970s with side-scan sonar.

And so, the mysteries continue. Who were all the crew and passengers on the ship? What happened to the ship's remains? Are they in Pemaquid's Inner or Outer Harbor in a spot we didn't search, did the ship wash out to sea farther than we looked, or did the settlers completely salvage it on a spring low tide in the 1600s? I stopped looking some twenty-five years ago but hope someone eventually discovers the answers.

The Silent Ford

By Chuck Rand

Footnotes (numbered) are available upon request.



The title of this article is deceptive. One can infer that the author is going to discuss aspects perhaps of Ford's new electric Mustang. But, one would be wrong. This article is about a little-known person indirectly involved with the Mill at Pemaquid Falls and directly related to two of its owners, those being Oakman Ford and William Penn Ford. Her name was Bessie S. Ford.

While preacher William Miller and his Millerite Adventists waited for the arrival of Jesus in Poultney, Vermont in October 1844, Oakman Ford and his wife Sarah were awaiting the arrival of Bessie Ford in Bristol, Maine. Bessie arrived. Jesus did not. Bessie was the third child of five from the union of Oakman and his second wife Sarah Miller. Her brother, William Penn Ford, was the firstborn of this union. We know quite a lot about Oakman, his son William, and his mill partner William Boyd, but not so much about Bessie. Granted, the evidence is meagre, but some sense of her life can be drawn by contemporary news articles and documents.

The 1870 census indicates that Bessie was a school teacher, but that by the 1880 census and forward no occupations were listed. But during the 1870's, Bessie played prominent roles in social and cultural venues in her Bristol-world exploding with commercial, social, and agricultural activities. In 1874 while Bristol was

proudly declaring that it makes more than one quarter of all the pogy oil in the United States and one-fifth of the chum, and that a telegraph line was soon to be constructed from Round Pond to Damariscotta, Bessie served on the Ladies' Committee to superintend the table of fancy articles in preparation for the Bristol Town Fair to be held on September 29, 30, and October 1. Fancy articles or goods were items that were novelties, accessories, or notions like sewing boxes, pincushions, whisk brooms, fans, and common household items.¹

Bristol folks were proud of their town as evidenced by the following quote from 1877: "Bristol has no Lawyer, no Rum Shop – but we have some smart preaching, and good schools. Who can say as much?"² At this time Bessie served as a trustee for the 1877 Bristol Town Fair, the eighth annual Fair and Cattle show of the Bristol Agricultural Society and Farmers' Club held on October 2, 3, and 4.³

But toward the end of 1877, events both good and not-so-good were happening. In October, the people of Round Pond wanted to stop Mr. Leonard Brightman from running his 'Pogy Chum Dryer' because of the emanating odor, "a little too much strength to it." At the same time, Bessie probably hosted the first social event of the season. "The season for sociable has commenced in this town. The first of the season at Pemaquid Falls, was held last Saturday evening at the house of Wm. Ford... Haven't the good people of Bristol Mills got spirit enough to start one? We are getting to be very unsocial in this village."⁴

In November 1877, the Reverend Lewis D. Evans delivered a lecture on 'Fast Young Men' at the McKinley school house at Pemaquid Falls nearby the Ford house. Originally from Wales where his family were miners, Evans served as pastor in Bristol between 1875 and 1881.⁵

In August 1884, a near tragic accident happened to Bessie. Reportedly, "Miss Bessie Ford of Bristol, while in the act of crossing the street near Main Hotel, was struck by a carriage, driven by Mr. W. B. Dunbar, upon the knee and knocked down with some injury."⁶ The driver of the carriage was twenty-four-year-old, William Burnham Dunbar, who was living with his parents Edward and Lucinda Dunbar in Damariscotta. Dunbar was making a living as a huckster, not used here as a pejorative. A huckster was the man who came around with his cart or carriage transporting vegetables and other products for sale.⁶ It is not known if this accident had lingering effects on Bessie or whether or not Dunbar reimbursed her for any doctor exams and medications.

The decade of the 1890s saw many changes to the economies, social structure and culture of the villages of Bristol. While the lobster industry was languishing during the mid-1880s, "a burgeoning summer population in the 1890s and 1900s increased the demand for live lobsters, making the business of lobstering the peninsula's second most important industry behind only the housing and feeding of summer visitors."⁷

In October 1890, a sidewalk committee was to commence extending the sidewalks toward Pemaquid Falls. "They have some of the planks on the ground and more are being sawed. They intend to meet the Pemaquid Sidewalk Association halfway."⁸ Bessie was active in the Pemaquid Library Association.⁹ And by 1898, the work at brother William's sawmill was remarkable. To one reporter, the mill sounded "like music."¹⁰

Bessie never married, but an intriguing letter was recently discovered that might indicate some romance in her life. It was an April 28, 1895 letter to Bessie from a Robert Dolliver in Presque Isle, Maine in response to a letter he received from Bessie. In this letter, certain correspondence was discussed that might have been expressions of love between them. "I too had in mind what you inform me was in yours, the destruction of our letters. I have burned yours as you tell me you have burned mine, which is the better way as we both think. I trust you are well...may happiness also be yours through life. I am very respectfully, Robert H. Dolliver" ¹¹ This round of correspondence may have been triggered by the fact that Dolliver had just married his second wife Dora H. Clark on April 9, 1895. His first wife Meriam Thompson had died in 1891.

Toward the end of the 1890s and during the rest of her life, Bessie suffered some setbacks to her health and apparently to her hearing. In late January or early February 1898, Bessie, now 53 years old, was reportedly sick for two weeks. The nature of her ailment was not reported.¹² Not that the following are indicative of any health issues, in 1902 Bessie purchased from Elmer S. Elliott, general merchandiser, two mattresses and a combination

commode totaling \$8.15. The following year she purchased from Robert Montgomery Sproul, among a few other things, one pound of dates and one pound of figs.¹³ Dates are a natural sweetener as well as high in fiber benefiting digestive health. Figs also promote digestive health while acting as a natural laxative.

Additionally, Bessie might have suffered hearing loss toward her later years, or perhaps was hard of hearing throughout her life. Perhaps hearing loss was a reason she left the profession of teaching. Whatever the cause and whenever it happened, a Dr. J. Rider Powell of Boston sent Bessie a follow-up letter dated February 29, 1904 to his letter of December. In his recent letter, Powell used high sales pressure tactics on Bessie to purchase his phono-pneumo treatment called the Vibrator to cure her deafness. He writes, "It was my intention not to write to you again, but I am extremely anxious to cure you, because I know that by so doing you will become interested in my treatment and recommend it to others, and in that way I will be amply repaid for the very low offer which I am about to make you...P.S.—If you do not take advantage of this offer, I shall have your name erased from my books and no further letters will be written to you."¹⁴

Dr. Guy Clifford Powell of Peoria, Illinois was actually the inventor of the Vibrator, one of many examples of his quackery. In 1905, he would add electricity to his quack invention calling it the Electro-Vibratory Cure for Deafness that initially was priced at \$100 and promoted through mail-order marketing as was the current (no pun intended) case with Bessie.¹⁵ In Bessie's case, the Vibrator was described as a stethoscope-without-its-chest piece. This was how one would use it: "Place the Vibrator in the ears and mouth, as seen in the cut. Hold the ends in the ears snugly with the hands, suck gently with the mouth for about a second, then stop for a second, and keep repeating this operation for about three minutes. In case of deafness the ear drum is sunken in, and by sucking with the mouth it is drawn out, and then by stopping the drum collapses back again. In this way the drum is worked and is brought back to its normal flexibility. After doing this for about three minutes then the patient should repeat the letter "B" softly for about half a minute, still holding the mouth over the ends of the tube. By saying this the drum and chain of bones are vibrated and sound is brought directly to the auditory nerve, thus stimulating it to activity. The instrument should be used every other night. When only one ear is affected one tube should be put in the ear, and the finger should be held over the end of the other tube."¹⁶ There is no indication that Bessie purchased this device of this snake oil salesman.

The partnership of William Ford & William Boyd ended in August 1910 when Boyd died. Soon after in 1911, Ford decided to sell the mill and retire from the mill business. On May 6, 1911, through a short series of transactions, partners George Elmore Orbeton of Rockport and Niven Crawford from Warren became the new mill owners.¹⁷ Bessie continued to live with her brother William and his wife Ellen Perkins Ford.

By November 1915, improvements to the town were made as well as many social activities were in full swing. The state road near the Bristol High School under the supervision of Orington Poland was finished. Undoubtedly preparing for next summer's tourists, forty-six-year-old Captain Henry Tarr, owner of the Hotel Waneta, slipped and fell off a staging seriously injuring his ankle. The Senior class of Bristol High School held a tremendously successful Negro minstrel show in the Surf Casino. "After the minstrel, there was a free dance which was enjoyed by everyone present. The net profit was forty-eight dollars, which is to be used for the 1916 graduation." Moreover, a Punch and Judy show visited New Harbor, "and met with great success, as every school child and many of the parents within five miles of the village attended. After the little drama was over presents were distributed among the children which delighted them as much as the show itself."¹⁸

But by September 1918, the harsh reality of the "Spanish Influenza" pandemic was present in Bristol and throughout Maine affecting individuals, schools and businesses. The Sheepscot Echo poetically and somewhat mockingly advised, "Better be careful what you do. You may catch the Spanish flu. Doctors say it's something new, but it seems much like the old epizoo." "Epizoo" is a shortened version of epizootic which denotes or relates to a disease that is temporarily prevalent and widespread in an animal population. The Echo also reported that Westport schools reopened after being closed for three weeks due to the flu.¹⁹

Two months later Frank Tarr of New Harbor succumbed to the flu. “He was a young man of excellent habits, and had been but recently married. His death is a sad blow to his family. His brother Lewis drives the stage to South Bristol.”²⁰

And New Harbor was not the only place savaged by this pandemic. By early March 1919, Monhegan Island was struck “with full force.” With a population of a little more than 100, “between 40 and 50 [were] reported to be ill with the disease, some seriously ill.”²¹ Even Bessie who was reported during this time to be housebound almost all winter with illness, “was able to be out calling on her friends...”²² Was she struck by the pandemic? By 1920 when the Whiskeyites, an interest group against National Prohibition, wailed that influenza victims were suffering for want of whiskey, that it was some sort of medication or cure, the only people in the Ford household were William Ford, herself, and a boarder named Edna F. Wheeler, the daughter of Francis and Martha Wheeler and wife of Frank Searle. Regarding the Whiskey Trust and its pronouncements, physicians claimed “Indulgence in whiskey is [a] pretty sure way to invite influenza and the drunkard has a mighty poor chance of getting over pneumonia.”²³

When all was said and done, the pandemic killed 50 million people worldwide and about 675,000 in the United States. In Maine between September 1918 and May 1919, there were almost 47,000 cases reported and about 5,000 deaths.²⁴

By February 1921, Bristol townspeople heard the news of Bessie’s ill health.²⁵ She was 76 years old and probably enduring the ailments of old age, and perhaps the lasting effects of the influenza and her accident years ago.

While the Orbeton & Crawford business partnership continued until 1923 when they sold the mill to Chester Wells Poole, Bessie would die on April 11th. She was interred in the Harrington Cemetery along with her mother and father and brother William and sister-in-law Ellen.²⁶

From horse-drawn carriages to horseless carriages, Bessie’s life spanned those changes heralding somewhat of a modern era for the town of Bristol. In a way, sort of signaling this beginning, is an advertisement for a car, ironically not a Ford, in the Lincoln County News the day after Bessie’s death. It was the “New Chandler Six” that darts ahead in high gear. It featured the Pikes Peak motor built by the Chandler Motor Car Company featuring the “chummy sedan” for \$1,695 and available at the Motor Service Station in Damariscotta, Maine, the ‘big city’ to some growing up in Bristol.²⁷ And so it goes...and it goes fast.

Boozing It Up vs The Temperance Movement in Old Bristol

By Pete Hope

In his book, The History of Bristol & Bremen, John Johnston starts his chapter on the temperance movement this way: “No place in all the country in early times probably suffered more from the giant evil of intemperance than this town of Bristol.” Wow! If Johnston had found records of 17th Century Pemaquid, he would have found that fishermen then were a hard drinking lot, and John Earthy had a tavern where they hung out. There is no doubt that there was a lot of hard drinking at the time.

William Sproul’s inn provided food, lodging, a stable and hard cider, beer, wine, and rum. This was typical. In 1782, the town licensed Samuel Boyd to have “...a publicke house, keeping good hours and good behavior in case of complaint.” Later, his brother John and widow Sally McKown were licensed to have a public house. The stipulation put on Samuel’s license was typical of the times. At some point there was a tavern in the Tibbetts farmhouse.

I googled alcohol use at that time and found that the average male then drank three times as much as the average male today! A *Lewiston Sun* article in the October 17, 2021 paper was about the growing popularity of

hard cider. It will have to grow enormously to catch up with the 18th and 19th century drinkers! In 1821, the small town of Limerick consumed 1500 barrels!

As I wrote earlier, “The Second Great Awakening” provided a stimulus for a national temperance movement. Sunday meetings were held in Bristol Mills and Dr. Lyman Beecher’s enthusiastic sermons on the evils of alcohol were read. In August, this led to a meeting in the town house. Rev. Enos Baxter opened the meeting with a prayer, several fiery speeches were made, and a paper was passed around to make a pledge of abstinence. Thirty-two men signed this, and more later. Half of the men taking the pledge were from North Bristol. They were: Phillips Hatch, Sr.; Phillips Hatch, Jr.; Waterman Hatch; John Hatch; Aaron Hatch; Samuel Erskine, Henry Erskine, Alexander Erskine, Jr.; Phillips Crooker; Prince Crooker; James Drummond, Jr.; William Hunter; Samuel Bearce; John Hanly, III; and James Varney. These were North Bristol’s “cold water men.” More joined the movement but the majority of men remained hard drinkers for the time being.

As you can well imagine, this movement was not everyone’s cup of tea, and town records reveal that selectmen granted several liquor licenses before and after the movement started. In 1827, James Erskine and Thomas Chamberlain were licensed to sell “spiritous liquors.” Liquor was probably sold in their stores in Bristol Mills. In 1831, Jacob Butler was “licensed as a retailer of spiritous liquors.” It is interesting to note that a majority of men at the town meeting on September 10, 1832, voted to recommend to the selectmen to issue no licenses for the following year. Nationwide and in Bristol, the Washington Movement caught on. This aimed to pull out of the gutter those unfortunates who had fallen off the wagon. The Society met for a time in the 1812 Armory that had been moved down to the north end of the village.

Neal Dow, a Quaker who became mayor of Portland around 1850, was a fanatic prohibitionist. He was president of the Maine Temperance Union in 1850. Dow was nicknamed “the Napoleon of Temperance” and the “Father of Prohibition.” Due to his efforts, the legislature passed state-wide prohibition in 1851. The law made it illegal to manufacture, sell or use alcohol. Dow enforced the law very strictly in Portland. This led hard drinking Irishmen to riot in 1855. One man was killed and several wounded before the mob was repulsed. Dow did not run for mayor for a third term. The 1851 law more or less stayed in effect in Maine until 1934 when national prohibition was repealed.

Bristol remained dry for a lot longer.

Your Park

On July 12th of this year, the Board of Directors voted to approve the Pemaquid Falls Park project plan, and with that step, the park became Your Park. When completed, we hope you will share our pride for what will be a place that indeed complements the mill building and the history center while demonstrating OBHS’s respect for our environment.

Your Park is grounded on two key passages from two documents released in 2020 and later expanded upon with a Memorandum of Understanding executed by OBHS and Coastal Rivers and the mutually signed Quitclaim Deed’s codicils. One text states that the “premises is to be used as a center for local history and natural resource conservation”. Another lets readers know the vision is to “tell the history of the mill, land, fish, and plants and do so while conserving the property.” Taken together, the Pemaquid Falls Park seeks to complement the historic purpose of the buildings and carry out the conservation responsibilities cited in the two documents.

To transition from the dirt, rocks, and weeds that are there today to what you see below requires . . .

- Removing asphalt and concrete
- Replacing existing dirt and invasive vegetation with soil supporting plants particularly good at returning cleaner water to the soil

- Adding plants and shrubbery reminiscent of the mill's operating days as well as being adept at attracting bees and butterflies
- Grading surfaces carefully, building berms, and crowning traffic ways to control the flow of surface water to catch basins that connect to underground pipes that move that runoff to a rain garden
- Constructing walkways and traffic ways with multiple layers of inert material cleaning the water as it drains into the soil
- Planting at least 20 trees that offer shade while releasing oxygen into the atmosphere
- Providing easy access to conveniently located information kiosks and comfortable benches and more.

When completed, Your Park will be a safe, secure park focused on Old Bristol's past as much as it is on our environment's future. . . a welcoming and attractive public space at the center of the peninsula . . . a place where everyone will find much to learn and enjoy.

We welcome your support to hasten this plan becoming a reality. Please contact Chuck Farrell, the leader of the Park Project, at 207-350-9103 or at cfarrell.me@gmail.com if you have any questions or suggestions to share.

OLD BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Elvers and the Mill – What Is the Connection?

You have probably heard that Old Bristol Historical Society (OBHS) is leasing out some space in the mill building for an elver buying station. Elvers are baby eels, 2 to 3 inches long, that are harvested in the Pemaquid River in the spring. During this time, elver fishermen move to the area for a few weeks. OBHS has allowed them to set up their campers in the mill parking lot. Many of these fishermen are Native Americans from Washington County. They need to protect their fishing spots and harvest the elvers every few hours, so living here makes the most sense.

This summer, Maine Eel Trading and Aquaculture (META), one of the largest elver buyers in the state, approached OBHS about setting up an elver buying station right here where the fishermen are. There are many rules about the elver fishery and one of them is the buying stations must not be attached to a house. This is so the station can be inspected at any time by Marine Patrol officers without them having to get a warrant, thus making enforcement much easier.

META first suggested a 12'x20' shed to be placed on the land in March and removed in June. Due to restrictions in the purchase agreement between OBHS and Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust, this was not possible. However, OBHS did have an unused space in the bowels of the mill that META agreed would be suitable. This room is part of the shed on the north side of the main building that was built in the 1940's. Above the room, on the main level, is the electric motor which drove the mill after 1949. The room itself does not lend itself well to museum operations due to poor access by the public.

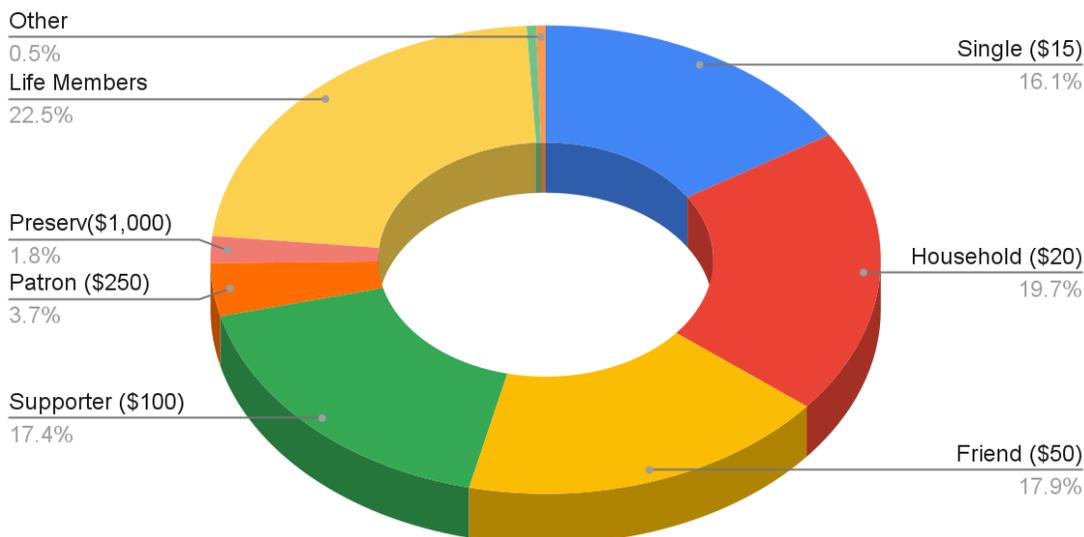
META is paying for all the alterations to the buying station and will be removing much of their equipment when the elver season ends in June. They are paying a significant lease fee to use this space. As with many mill museums across the country, some source of income besides admissions and donations is needed to cover overhead and operations. OBHS considers itself fortunate to be offered this opportunity. While we have signed a one-year agreement, it is hoped this relationship with META will last for many years. OBHS is also pleased to be able to assist our Native American friends as they pursue this lucrative fishery.

Membership Committee

This year, OBHS instituted a new membership schedule, giving members an opportunity to support the Society at a level of their choice. The new levels are: Single \$15, Household \$20, Friend \$50, Supporter \$100, Patron \$250, Benefactor \$500, Partner \$750, Preservationist \$1,000. The Life Members which OBHS offered for many years will be honored in perpetuity, however that level is not offered in the current membership schedule.

This new membership schedule was very well received by members; 65% of our paid members in 2021 opted to pay dues at a higher than household level. We had a record number of new members this year, accounting for 43% of our total paid membership. Here is a breakdown of our membership levels for 2021:

2021 Membership by Category





P.O. Box 87
Bristol, ME 04539

OBHS Campaign 2020-21

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Please use my gift of:

_____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 _____ \$1,000 _____ other

For the following projects:

_____ The Mill at Pemaquid Falls

_____ The Bristol History Center

_____ The Pemaquid Falls Park

_____ Where Most Needed

We sincerely Thank You for your support

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Old Bristol Historical Society – Fall 2021 Newsletter

P. O. Box 87

Bristol, ME 04539