



# OLD BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Biannual Newsletter of the Society – Spring 2022

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## A Message From Our President

Hello everyone. I hope that you have all fared well over the winter. Spring has arrived, and so has our spring newsletter. This edition includes articles on Bristol history, some important accomplishments since our fall 2022 newsletter, new exhibits at the history center, and summer programs. It also offers some fun volunteer opportunities. There is a lot going on!

While our primary focus is on work that is happening now, in 2023 we have also embarked on a project to more sharply focus who we are, where we are headed, and how to get there. There are currently three steps to this effort: updating our mission statement, describing a common vision for where we are headed in the future, and creating a strategic plan for how we will make it happen.

I am happy to report that our Board recently adopted an updated mission statement at our April meeting:

“We collect, preserve, and share the Bristol region's rich history and prehistory for present and future generations.”

At 134 words, our prior mission statement was almost a short essay. One can easily remember and explain our updated version. While collecting and preserving important aspects of Bristol's history are core to our purpose, we now intentionally include the word “share” to emphasize that education is just as important.

Although we recognize that the word “history” can be all encompassing, we have chosen to also include the word “prehistory” to emphasize that we take a comprehensive view of our history that has brought us to where we are today, and which affects where we are heading for the future. Our history includes our geologic, climatic and natural history. It includes the history of indigenous peoples up to the present. It includes history as it has evolved since the first European contacts. It can include life happening today, which will be tomorrow's history.

The phrase “for present and future generations” is included because these are the people we serve, the ones with whom we wish to share the Bristol region's rich and continuing legacy.

We are now working to craft a vision statement that describes what OBHS wants to look like 20 or more years in the future as we successfully fulfill our mission. This vision statement will help inspire us, guide us and bind us as we move forward into the future.

Once this vision is clear, we will be creating a strategic plan to make it all happen. The mission, vision and plan will be reviewed and updated periodically as conditions evolve. We look forward to sharing them with you.

Before wrapping up, I would like to acknowledge two special groups. Firstly, OBHS is honored that the Bristol Lions have selected us to continue their legacy by endowing us to offer educational grants to graduating high school seniors.

I also want to offer my heartfelt thank you to our members, volunteers, donors, those who contribute historical and other materials, local contractors, and more. Together, you make everything that we do possible. You help make Bristol the special place that it is. Thank you!

I wish you all a delightful summer.

Mark

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## Officers and Directors of the Old Bristol Historical Society, July 2022 - July 2023

*President: Mark Ziarnik*  
*Vice President: Jody Bachelder*  
*Treasurer: Don Means*  
*Assistant Treasurer: Chuck Farrell*  
*Secretary: Belinda Osier*

*Directors: Phil Averill, Margaret Hayter, Robert Ives, Edward Kitson,  
Pat Porter, Warren Reiss, Robert McLaughlin, Keith Mestrich,  
Anne K. Nord*

## Bristol History Center Vaults to New Heights

It's been a long process, but the Old Bristol Historical Society has finally finished construction of its climate-controlled, fire-proof vault located in the Bristol History Center. Long concerned about the lack of appropriate storage for its collections, in 2018, when the Society was still located at the unheated McKinley school, a plan was made to enclose a small section of the building using fire-resistant materials and to install heating in the small space. However, in 2019, with the acquisition of the former Poole Bros. property, the OBHS finally had a suitable location where they could build a true vault. On April 5 of that year a design for a fire-proof, climate-controlled vault was drawn and submitted by architect Randy Smith and fundraising for the project began.



Belinda Osier stands in OBHS's new vault!

In October of 2020 demolition and construction began in earnest. In December of that year masons constructed the cinder block walls. In 2021 between August and December, the interior framing, insulation, and drywall were installed with volunteer labor. By mid-July 2022 the components of a climate-controlled storage vault were installed and connected. These components include a ductless mini-split heat pump system along with dehumidifier and humidifier equipment. In August, cement was poured to create the ceiling of the vault. Finally, in February 2023, the interior walls were painted, mobile compact-shelving (Spacesaver shelving) was added, and a 3-hour fire rated steel door was installed.

As summer approaches, Chuck Rand, collections manager, is preparing to move our collections from temporary storage into the vault. As he does so, he will be assigning locations for each item, which will allow our volunteer librarians to find and pull materials for visiting patrons.

We would like to thank all the individuals who supported this project with their financial donations and with their donations of labor. Also, thank you to all the vendors involved in the vault's construction including Steve Welton Masonry, Yereance & Son Plumbing & Heating, and Donnegan Systems, Inc. Finally, a big thank you to the Town of Bristol for its financial support of this important project.

## **Preserving Your Legacy** by Chuck Farrell

We're proud to inform you that the Old Bristol Historical Society Board of Directors approved the formation of an endowment, the 1765 Fund. Named in recognition of the year that the town of Bristol was incorporated, the 1765 Fund was formed to help assure OBHS's long-term sustainability and to broaden its community involvement.

Much has taken place over the course of these past several months. We drafted an Investment Policy that was peer-reviewed by legal and fiduciary experts. We also prepared a Denotation Acceptance Policy that was also peer-reviewed. The OBHS Board subsequently approved both policies.

We researched six investment firms that are recognized for their endowment management capabilities. After conducting lengthy interviews with four firms, we recommended H M Payson which the Board then approved. H M Payson was selected as our 1765 partner for numerous reasons including: it's a Maine-headquartered firm; it was formed in 1854; has an active office "right up the road" in Damariscotta; and manages assets of \$4.4 billion on behalf of its 3,400 clients, of which more than 10% are nonprofits. We're proud of our having OBHS's members residing in 30 states. Thus, learning that H M Payson's clients are located throughout the US and Canada was a welcomed plus.

There is much more to share with you about the OBHS 1765 Fund program and what the 1765 fund could mean to you. We'll be providing you with information throughout the months ahead.

## **Bristol Area Lions Club Passes the Torch to the Old Bristol Historical Society**

by Chuck Farrell

For the past 65 years the Pemaquid Peninsula has benefitted from a very active, community service-centered nonprofit—the Bristol Area Lions Club. Over the past ten or so years its steady robust number of members began to decline. So much so that the remaining members had to reach a very difficult decision last fall: the much-loved Lions Club had to begin taking the steps necessary to dissolve.

Among its assets is a substantial endowment, for which the annual proceeds have been used over the past 35 years to award 94 scholarships, totaling over \$150,000, to deserving high school graduates who reside in Bristol and South Bristol.

The Old Bristol Historical Society was honored to learn on January 30, 2023 that, among the three possible recipients of the endowment, the Bristol Area Lions Club voted unanimously to select the Old Bristol Historical Society as the organization best suited to administer the endowment fund and continue the Bristol Lions Club Scholarship program under the name Bristol Lions Legacy Fund.

With that decision made, the two organizations began working diligently to implement a smooth transition. In addition to the many small and not-so-small tasks, e.g. selecting the students who will receive grants at the end of this school year, the Old Bristol Historical Society Board of Directors voted unanimously to pass a Board Motion that details ten conditions that both organizations agree to carry out as we go forward. Additionally, the Board of Directors also voted unanimously to pass a Board Resolution that details how the Bristol Lions Legacy Fund and the grant program are to be administered by the OBHS.

On Class Night, June 1<sup>st</sup>, the OBHS on behalf of the Bristol Area Lions Legacy Fund, will award up to four graduating seniors with \$3,000 grants to continue their studies at college, trade school, technical school, or community college. We'll update you soon after that exciting evening.

## Platinum . . . The Highest Rating



The homepage of the Old Bristol Historical Society (OBHS) website has a new addition: the 2023 Platinum Seal of Transparency. The OBHS was awarded the Platinum Seal by Candid.

Candid, an information service firm, gathers, analyzes, and provides access to detailed operational and financial information about non-profit organizations. Nonprofits are invited to register with Candid which then gathers and analyzes information from public and the registered nonprofits' sources.

Candid maintains information about 112,595 nonprofits of the more than 1,800,000 IRS-recognized 501 (C) (3) organizations. Of that, only 11,740 Candid-registered organizations earned the Platinum Seal rating.

OBHS earned Candid's highest honor by providing qualitative information about its mission, leadership, goals, programs, as well as quantitative information such as membership, donations, and financial records.

"We are deeply honored to have been awarded the Platinum Seal rating from Candid. The OBHS has worked hard to rebuild the historic Pemaquid Mill and create our new Bristol History Center, so we are encouraged by this important testimony to our work and mission," the OBHS President Mark Ziarnik stated.

For information on supporting or volunteering with the OBHS, visit please visit the OBHS website at [oldbristolhistoricalsociety.org](http://oldbristolhistoricalsociety.org).

## This Summer at the Bristol History Center... by Belinda Osier



Photographic postcard c 1922. From the Kendall & Carla Fossett Collections at OBHS.

OBHS is pleased to invite the public to view our new gallery exhibit that will focus on Bristol stores of the past. The exhibit, titled *Supplies, Sundries & Sustenance: The Stores of Bristol, 1855-1970*, will look at a sampling of stores, their owners, and their images by drawing upon items and images found in our collection or loaned from the Bristol community.

Nowadays there remain only two "general" stores in Bristol. C. E. Reilly & Son, Inc. was established on August 30, 1928 by Carl E. Reilly who passed it down to his son Reginald; it is now run by Carl's great grandson also named Carl Reilly. The store now known as King Ro Market is even older. First established by Alexander Yates in the 1800s, it has had a long list of

owners including James Nichols, Artell Bryant, William and Frances Russell, and William "B.J." Russell and Lori Crook; recently Owen and Amity Libby have taken over the reins.

But, it was not always like this. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, each of Bristol's villages had a variety of privately owned stores, many of which (though not all) are listed in the Maine Register. This exhibit will feature a sampling of those stores listed in the Register between the years 1855-1970 found under the category headings of "country stores," "general stores," "variety," and "groceries."

Two new displays will also be seen on walls in the reception area. One called *Highlights in Bristol History* will enumerate and explain certain historic and memorable dates, events, and people in five framed text panels covering prehistory, the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Did you know that when Fort Charles was built, Pemaquid was renamed Jamestown? Did you know that the date on the Town Hall is wrong? Does anyone remember that in 1965, three skeletons of indigenous people were unearthed during excavations at what became Colonial Pemaquid?

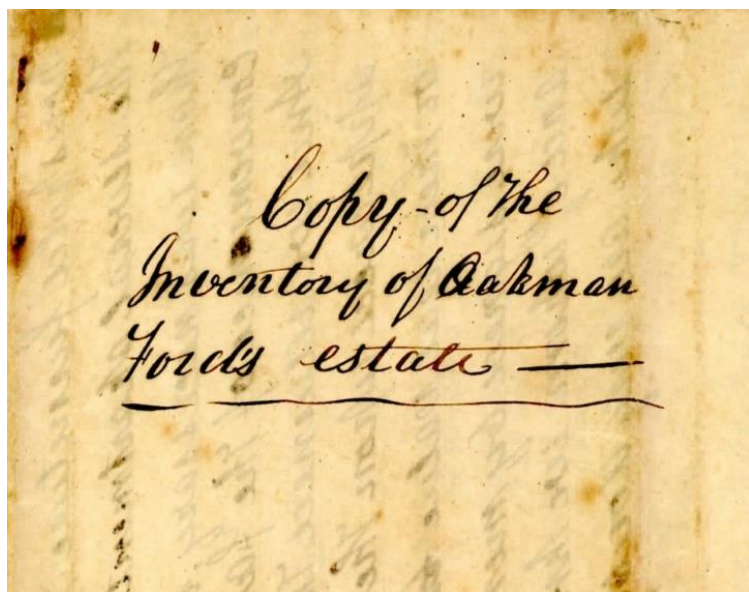
The other display will invite community participation. Eventually, we plan to have a permanent timeline created and installed on one wall of the reception room that places Bristol history within a broader historical context. In the meantime, we thought it would be fun for us and for visitors to think about interesting events that took place at the same time as important Bristol events and construct our own timeline over the summer. For example, in 1788, Bristol ceded some land to help create the town of Nobleboro; someone might add that that was the same year the U.S. Constitution was adopted. Or how about 1908 when George Little finished building the Fort William Henry memorial? That was the same year Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were found dead after a shootout in Bolivia. Bring your own fun or serious fact to add to the timeline and see what was going on in Bristol around the same time.

The Bristol History Center will open these exhibits on Saturday, May 27, 2023.

## The OBHS Invites Donations to its Collection

Have you ever wondered or worried about what's going to happen to those old Bristol diaries and ledger books that you keep in your closet? Or who's going to care about all those old family photographs you keep in a box? Well, the OBHS cares! One of the most important parts of the OBHS mission is to preserve important archival materials that record and tell the story of Bristol and its people. Now that our vault is finished and operational, we feel confident that we can offer the Bristol community a secure, LOCAL, climate-controlled facility where

Bristol's precious primary source materials can be both preserved and made accessible to patrons and researchers now and in the future. Therefore, we ask and encourage you, when pondering the next home for your treasured items, to consider donating them to the Old Bristol Historical Society!



Forty acres of land situated in said Bristol and bounded as follows: Westerly by Rufus Curtis' land; Easterly by the bed or center of Pemaquid Fresh River; Southerly by James Perkins' land and southerly by Pemaquid Salt River - being the homestead of said Ford together with a one story dwelling house, barn, stable, one three story building containing a grist mill, fulling mill, and one half of a saw mill thereon valued at five thousand dollars

\$5000.

## **The Estate Inventory of Oakman Ford, 1842** by Edward Kitson

Oakman Ford owned and operated the facility we now call the Pemaquid Mill from about 1838 to his death in 1865. In connection with a civil guardianship event in 1842, an inventory of his living estate was undertaken and a copy of this document is in the possession of the Old Bristol Historical Society. The original is on file at the Lincoln County Registry of Probate but is not currently available to the public.

The assets of Oakman Ford in 1842 totaled \$10,566.12 and can be divided into three broad categories: real estate, personal and business property and promissory notes due.

### **Real Estate**

The majority of Mr. Ford's assets were comprised of real estate holdings. In total they were worth \$7,010 (66.3% of the estate). The most valuable part of the real estate is the lot that includes the location of the OBHS Bristol History Center and Pemaquid Mill today. Valued at \$5,000 it comprised 40 acres of land and included a one-story house, barn, store and the existing mill building. The mill is described as "*one three-story building containing a grist mill, fulling mill and one half saw mill.*" The one-half saw mill indicates partial ownership of the sawmill and this is in keeping with his later Mammoth Mutual Insurance Company policy of 1848.

### **Personal and Business Property**

Although of the smallest aggregate value the personal and business property holdings are a relatively informative part of the report. With a total of \$1596.49 they represent only 15.1% of the estate. However, the one and one-half handwritten pages of items provides a relatively precise view of a particular moment in time. A note at the end of the inventory states: "*We here remark that we returned the aggregate of the household furniture because after having examined the several apartments of the house we found no more than necessary, in our opinion, for the comfort and convenience of the family.*"

The next group consists of interrelated transportation, farming and livestock items. There appears to be an arithmetic error as repeated attempts to reconcile the assessed values with the sum failed, however in total these items were valued around \$350. Also listed is a 3/16 share, worth \$150, in the Schooner Mary.

More pertinent are the remaining items. There is a valuation of the wood products at the mill, about 30,000 shingles. There were 9,000 pine and 21,000 mixed spruce and hemlock at \$2.50 and \$2 per thousand respectively with a total value of \$74.50. Wood processing related equipment includes a shingle machine (\$100), a circular saw (\$20) and a mill saw (\$4.50).

### **Promissory Notes**

The final section of the estate inventory are notes owed to Oakman Ford. They total \$1,959.63 (18.5% of the estate) were assessed at face value, without application of interest or 'their real value'. This is interesting phrasing which is further expanded upon in the final paragraph of the inventory. There are 79 lines of entries, many for multiple notes and a few predate Ford's acquisition of the Pemaquid operation in 1838. The names of note signers contain many family names still familiar in Bristol today and likely represent a partial map of interconnected family and social obligations.

### **Questions and Further Research**

As informative as this estate inventory is it also opens a variety of questions and possibilities for further research. A store is listed associated with his residence. Presumably this is a retail establishment (as opposed to 'storage') but there is no inventory listed. Why not? Was it rented to another person for operation?

The only wood products listed are shingles. Does this mean that other saw mill activities weren't happening? Were they happening and he only owned a portion of the means of production, not subsequent products? What other questions can be asked?

Likewise, there are no wool products listed although there is substantive investment and presence of equipment for this. Shearing and wool processing is typically a spring activity; does this further suggest a cessation of business activity in light of his mental health issues?

At the time of this inventory neither fulling nor grist milling equipment and associated items are noted beyond inclusion in the real property (as "*one three-story building containing a grist mill, fulling mill and one half saw mill*"). Why? Both fulling and grist milling activity had become increasingly centralized as the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed. Had Oakman Ford gotten out of both businesses? Had declining mental health forced him to step away?

Ford's half interest in a saw mill was later insured in 1848 and this is reflected in the earlier estate inventory. What does a half saw mill include? In the inventory there is a 'mill saw' (likely an up and down 'sash' type).

Finally, if the promissory notes were analyzed what sorts of social network reconstructions could be devised? Some of the notes were written by family members including his brother, Benjamin Ford. Others by relatives of his second wife, such as his brother-in-law, William Miller. Some by people with whom he had other close connections like his physician, and soon to be guardian, Arnold Blaney.

The estate inventory of Oakman Ford provides a window into the Pemaquid Mill at a well-bounded moment in time. Although it is not as comprehensive as the modern historian or appraiser might wish the OBHS is fortunate to have this document. It answers or strongly suggests answers to many questions about the history of the mill, yet leaves many avenues open for further research.

## **Those sweet harbingers of spring, Maple Trees** by Sarah Gladu

When I am walking in the woods on a late-February day, I find areas in the snow beneath a maple tree that are slushy with dripping tree sap. Squirrels and other animals know that if they break the twigs on a warm day, the sap will drip and they can lap it up and enjoy the sweet sugars. Humans no doubt learned by observing this behavior, and have enjoyed sap and its by-products, syrup and sugar, for thousands of years.

An indigenous friend once shared this Passamaquoddy story with me. A long time ago, the sap that came out of a maple tree was thick, brown and sweet. In those days, Gluskabe would go from village to village to keep an eye on the people on behalf of the Creator. One day, Gluskabe came to an abandoned village and he wondered what had happened to the people. He saw that all the people were lying on their backs under some maple trees, where the maple syrup was dripping into their mouths. The syrup had fattened them and made them lazy, so they could barely move.

*So Gluskabe made a large bucket from birch bark and filled it with water from the river. He added the water to all the maple trees until the sap was thin and clear. After a while, the people began to get up because the sap was no longer so thick and sweet. Gluskabe told them that if they wanted the syrup again, they would have to work hard to get it, because he did not want them to be lazy and fail to get ready for next winter!*



That's my favorite story of why sap is like sugar water and why it must be cooked down for many hours to thicken it. Other maples – like red maples and boxelders – also produce sweet sap, but the ratio of water to sugars is even higher.

Certainly, when daylight periods lengthen and daytime temperatures start to rise in late February, we start to feel the renewal that begins to permeate the forests. The trees respond as well, and the sap begins to flow from their roots into trunks, branches and buds.

The buds swell with the stored sugars and water in preparation for the opening of their leaves and flowers. Maple flowers are among the first to open, and they are splendid pendulums of red high above us once the sap has ceased to “run” and turns murky with minerals, and we pull the taps from the trees .

*Colletes* (cellophane bees), *Andrena* (mining bees), and *Lasioglossum* (sweat bees), are among the bees who pollinate red maple, and in fact with so few flowers available in early spring, the maple flowers are a very important source of food for them. Successful pollination results in the double samara, or fruit, that will later disperse maple seeds with the wind (helped by children who love to play with the “helicopter” seed coverings).

To me, these cycles – minerals moving from soil through the tree and into animals, energy from the sun powering the flow of water, pollination and seed development, and the seasonal changes – all intertwine to form this incredible textile of spring.

*Red maple blossom by Tom Arter*

*Reprinted with permission from Coastal Rivers Conservation Trust.*

## **Bristol Mill's Stone Arch Bridge Spans The Centuries**



As you drive through Bristol Mills on State Route 130, there are many reasons to slow down besides the posted 30 MPH speed limit. Because in addition to the local institutions and businesses, you will also discover a bit of Maine history that's on the National Register of Historic Places.

Spanning the Pemaquid River on Benner Road just east of its junction with 130 is the stone Arch Bridge. Its exact date of construction is lost to history, but an 1857 map of Lincoln County likely indicates that the bridge was built before then.

The stone Arch Bridge measures 21-feet across with the opening of the arch 14-feet wide and 14-feet high. While many arch bridges in Maine are made of very precisely cut stone, the Arch Bridge in Bristol Mills materials are more

roughly hewn. Yet, its lack of a uniform pattern and its hand-built construction give it a unique stamp that reflects the resourcefulness of the hard-working local folks who built it.

Now countless generations later, the Arch Bridge continues to serve the community. So, the next time you're passing through Bristol Mills, don't pass up the chance to see this historic site for yourself.



## Volunteer Opportunities

The OBHS is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization. As such, the more volunteers become actively involved, the more the OBHS can accomplish. If you can help in any of the following areas, your donation of time would be greatly appreciated. Together we can create and maintain an historical society worthy of Bristol's rich history!

**Exterior Painting:** The exterior trim and the west wall of the Bristol History Center are in critical need of scraping and painting this summer. If you're able to help with this project, please contact Belinda at 207-653-6685 or [bosier207@gmail.com](mailto:bosier207@gmail.com). Many hands make light work!

**Staffing the Center:** Last summer we were able to open the Center for 3 hours/3 days a week from June 1-Oct. 8. With more volunteers, we could expand the hours that we're open to the public. If you're interested in helping out in this way, please contact Belinda at 207-653-6685 or [bosier207@gmail.com](mailto:bosier207@gmail.com)

**Education Committee:** The Education Committee is always looking for new people to join their committee to help plan activities and programs for our local students. If interested, please contact Belinda at 207-653-6685 or [bosier207@gmail.com](mailto:bosier207@gmail.com)

**Gardeners:** Would you be willing to help out with spring or fall clean up, planting, weeding, watering, or any other outdoor work? And perhaps meet some new friends while doing it? We'd love to meet you. If you would like to learn more, please contact the OBHS at [OldBristolHistoricalSociety03@gmail.com](mailto:OldBristolHistoricalSociety03@gmail.com).

**Mill Construction Work:** Our volunteer work crew needs more help with the following tasks: organizing lumber materials, clearing out the undercroft and constructing a catwalk, opening a rear exit in the mill and constructing a fire escape, planning and constructing a new set of stairs and penstock to the turbine, and installing a steel bulkhead. Please contact Phil at 207-529-5349 or [oceanguy@tidewater.net](mailto:oceanguy@tidewater.net)

**Computer Help:** Do you have experience working with databases? We are an expanding organization that needs help managing our database. If you're willing and able to help in this area, please contact Margaret at [margarethayter@gmail.com](mailto:margarethayter@gmail.com).

## **Old Bristol Historical Society Summer Talk Series - 2023**

*(Start times will be posted on our website)*

1. The History and Reconstruction of the Mill at Pemaquid Falls  
Speakers: Dr. Neill DePaoli & Phil Averill  
June 25  
Bristol Congregational Church Fellowship Hall
  
2. Down Memory Lane - Old Photographs of Bristol  
Speakers: Belinda Osier and Chuck Rand  
July 9  
Bristol Congregational Church Fellowship Hall
  
3. Witchcraft in Midcoast Maine - Part 2.  
Speaker: Professor Emerson "Tad" Baker  
July 23  
Bristol Congregational Church
  
4. How Names suggest Wabanaki History and Presence  
Speaker: Professor Joseph Hall  
August 6  
Bristol Congregational Church Fellowship Hall
  
5. Dixie Bull in Pemaquid  
Speaker: James Nelson  
August 20  
Bristol Congregational Church

All talks are free to OBHS members, \$5.00 for non-members



**Old Bristol Historical Society, P.O. Box 87, Bristol, ME 04539**

OBHS needs your financial support to complete the Bristol History Center, continue our restoration of the mill, and improve our grounds. Here are examples of some of our upcoming projects:

**Bristol History Center**

- Museum-quality exhibit cases, moveable walls, and benches - \$11,600
- Reading Room furniture and equipment - \$2,600
- Install a wheelchair ramp - \$5,000
- Updated heat pump-based heating system -\$25,000
- Conference Room flooring and window blinds - \$5,800

**The Mill**

- Continue structural restoration of the mill - \$85,000
- Create mill displays - \$9,000
- Build an emergency exit - \$10,000
- Build an observation catwalk for public to view mill undercroft - \$15,000
- Replace mill windows - \$ 2,000

**The Grounds**

- Restoration of topsoil as well as native plants, trees and shrubs - \$11,800
- Debris removal - \$3,800

We would be very grateful for your contributions to further these projects.

Thank You!

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

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (Cell/Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell/Home) \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_Enclosed is my check made payable to: Old Bristol Historical Society  
Mail to: Old Bristol Historical Society, P. O. Box 87, Bristol, ME 04539

You may also give online via PayPal at <https://oldbristolhistoricalsociety.org/support/>

Please use my contribution for the: \_\_\_Mill \_\_\_History Center \_\_\_Grounds \_\_\_Where most needed.

**Old Bristol Historical Society – Spring 2023 Newsletter**

**P. O. Box 87**

**Bristol, ME 04539**