

The Newsletter of the Tremont Historical Society

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Summer 2012

Published periodically at Bass Harbor, Maine. The Society is a non-profit organization whose officers are: John MacDuffie, President; Charles Liebow, Vice President; Priscilla Keene, Secretary; and Michael Smith, Treasurer. The Newsletter is mailed to members and contributors. Extra copies are available. Newsletter Editor is John MacDuffie.



The sloop Merry Wings, owned by Freeman Gott, grounded out alongside the Benson wharf in Bernard. Local lore has it that she was the fastest sailboat in the area, and from time to time was entered in the early races held in the Great Harbor (Southwest Harbor-Northeast Harbor-Cranberry Isles neighborhood) under the auspices of the Northeast Harbor Fleet, and there proved her merit by beating everybody! This picture is dated ca. 1903. Ed.

Bartlett's Island Trip Planned

by Muriel Davisson

The Tremont and Mount Desert Island Historical Societies will sponsor a Bartlett's Island Historical Study Trip for Society members on September 22. The trip will last most of the day and will involve a lot of walking. We will tour the middle part of the island and visit highlights such as the "Revolutionary" cottage, the old farm house and the oldest cemetery. It is a fund-raising event for the two societies. The cost of the trip is \$40 per person. More details on times and what you will need to bring will be provided to participants prior to the trip.

At the request of the Rockefeller family the trip is open only to members of these two societies and to a total of 40 persons – 20 for each Society. Because we anticipate a lot of interest, we have tried to devise an equitable way to distribute tickets. For the Tremont Society, the first 10 tickets will be first come first served. The second 10 will be selected by lottery. Please sign up before September 1st, which is when we will draw tickets in the lottery. [Send your request for a spot on this trip to Muriel Davisson at 244-3826 or \[muriel.davisson@gmail.com\]\(mailto:muriel.davisson@gmail.com\).](#)

We are grateful to the Rockefeller family for this opportunity to visit Bartlett's Island to learn more about its history and see the improvements the Rockefeller family has made.

As a prequel to the trip, at the Tremont Historical Society July 23rd meeting Muriel Davisson, co-author of *A History of Bartlett's Island, Mount Desert, Maine*, presented a talk on Bartlett's Island.

NEW ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INITIATED

by John MacDuffie

Not for the first time, to be sure, but as a renewed effort attracting the interest of a number of members of the Tremont Historical Society, an Oral History Group has formed under the leadership of Board member Mary Jones of Bass Harbor. A preliminary training session was held under the leadership of Todd Little-Siebold of the COA faculty. A listing of persons known to the group members who might be interviewed was made. Suitable equipment for digital recording of interviews was ordered and has been received. Questions to be provided to interviewees in advance have been formulated in various areas of interest. And practice interviews are being scheduled so that members of the group can prepare for their own participation.

Through this Newsletter we hope to reach more local (or summer) residents who might enjoy participating in this project. Perhaps you have memories of your experiences, or stories you have heard of life here in this fascinating place. You might want to become an interviewer, or even make your contribution to the project via telephone, Skype, or internet. Please contact the chair, Mary Jones, at her e-mail address (seascapebass1121@gmail.com) or by telephone at 244-5461 for more information. You may also contact the Editor, John MacDuffie, at redhousemaine@gmail.com or 244-0259.

EARLY SETTLER STEPHEN RICHARDSON

by Becky Burnham

from the dedication ceremony for the memorial stones in the Crockett Point Cemetery, Bernard, Sept. 24, 2011

Brothers Stephen and Hugh Richardson are said to have been English soldiers, discharged by the British in Boston. They then settled in Londonderry, Ireland. There Stephen met, eloped with and married Jane Montgomery. Having incurred the ill will of the Montgomery family and being suspected of disloyalty to the new dynasty, they left for America. Hugh went to Barbados. Stephen and Jane arrived in Gloucester in October 1738, with two children, son James and a son Stephen, born on the voyage 23 October, 1738. A daughter died during the voyage..

Tales have been told through tradition about Jane being called Lady Jane, however, in 1987, material was found in Ireland to indicate that although the Montgomery family was titled, they were not fancy enough to be called Lord and Lady. Jane may have been a relative of General Richard Montgomery, who was killed at Quebec, rather than his aunt.

Actually all five Richardson brothers came to live on Mt. Desert Island originally. James (Somesville) was first, about 1761 – eventually with 11 children, followed soon by Stephen, about 1763 eventually with 6 children, then Thomas, also about 1763 eventually with 13 children – next Elijah (5 children before leaving here and probably returning to the Londonderry, New Hampshire area) and last Hugh, eventually with at least 2 daughters and possibly a son Hugh who was married April 1, 1812 to a Mary Scott. They did not stay here long.

The first 3 married Gott sisters. Elijah married Jemima Gott, niece of Daniel Gott, son of Samuel. Hugh married Elizabeth Clark in Gloucester. That is how there happened to be 38 first cousins from these five brothers and their wives.

We wanted you to know why these brothers were accepted for Patriotic Service during the Revolutionary War time period. Stephen Richardson was put on the Committee of Correspondence, Safety and Inspection Mt. Desert was forming as a Town on Mt. Desert Island. This “Plantation” began its organization on 30 March of 1776 and all meetings were held in Stephen’s home. His home seemed to be the place for all public meetings and his brother James was always the clerk.

On the 8th of October 1776 Stephen was chosen the first Representative from Mt. Desert Island to the “General Court” which was the Legislature of Massachusetts. A long way to travel. During this time period this was indeed considered a patriotic service. The first meeting of the Town organization was on April 6 in 1789, under the Federal Constitution, and all three brothers, James, Stephen and Thomas were elected to prominent official positions.

A quote: “Stephen built the first mill at Bass Harbor and opened the first public road between Bass Harbor and Beech Hill. In family manuscripts he was remembered by his immediate descendants as a man of marked ability.” He was one of the Committee chosen to run the boundary line between the Bernard and de Gregoire grants, known to Mt. Desert settlers as “the French Line.”

FIDDLE MAKING, *continued*

by Ralph Stanley

At Deer Isle I have found a fiddle that is owned by the Sylvester family that has a very similar lion's head. They don't know who made this fiddle or where it came from. The original owner was a fisherman who went each year with the mackerel fleet to the Bay of St. Lawrence where he was eventually lost at sea in a storm. There is some speculation that the fiddle came from Cape Breton. Many of the early settlers of Cape Breton Island came from Scotland and having no musical instruments made their own violins.

I varnished [my] first violin with a red varnish I bought in Bangor. This varnish never really dried to my satisfaction but I played it for several years mostly with a group at the Knights of Pythias Lodge Hall in Bernard. This hall had once been the Bernard Grammar School. I really did not like the sticky varnish so I decided to scrape it down to bare wood and refinish it. Meanwhile I played a violin I had bought from Millard Spurling. This violin had a mother-of-pearl inlay on the back. Millard had bought the violin from George Joy, who I believe taught school at Great Cranberry Island. Millard had intentions of learning to play but never did. After his wife died he had a lady friend at Ellsworth who had a daughter going to school who wanted to take violin lessons so he let her borrow it. When he got it back it was damaged. He had it for a number of years before he sold it to me. I repaired it and that gave me something to play while I scraped the varnish off the one I made. I intended to re-varnish it but didn't get to it so it sat around in this condition for years.

While playing at the Grange Hall at Northport I mis-stepped and fell off the stage with the Spurling violin in my hand. I was not hurt but the top was in splinters. I had another violin, made in Japan, that someone had given me so I got that one out and played it for a while. Then I decided to refinish the one I had made and I have that one playable again. For finish I used several coats of polyurethane, having previously colored the wood with a stain that I made out of beet juice.

In the meantime I had some parts where I had started to make another but laid them aside. I had a back that was made of beech wood that came out of the firewood pile. I made the sides of poplar that I had in the shop, and I found a piece of Maine white cedar left over from boat planking, to make the belly. David Norwood gave me a piece of maple for the neck. This violin has quite a loud tone.

After I got that violin done I decided to make another. The back, sides and neck of this one are made of poplar furnished by my brother-in-law, David Holmes, from a tree cut in Kingfield, Maine. The top is another piece of cedar. I finished it bright with no color, just the natural color of the wood. This violin has the best sound of all that I have made. While making this violin I made a new spruce belly for the Spurling violin, which has greatly improved its sound.

I am now making another, number four. The back will be made of cherry, again furnished by David Holmes from a tree cut in Kingfield. I have some spruce for the belly from a healthy tree that blew down recently in Southwest Harbor. The neck will be maple from the woodpile. While waiting for this wood to season I have made a new spruce belly for an old fiddle that was given to me years ago by Les White, Jr. I once made a new neck for this fiddle but it never sounded good. The new belly has greatly improved the sound.

At present I am making a new belly for another old fiddle that I had. This belly is made of local white pine. Here again I am making do with what I could find.

This address was given by Ralph to the Historical Society in August 2011.



The “albino violin” made by Ralph Stanley, the fourth instrument he has made during his long career of shaping wood into beautiful and useful objects for the pleasure of many.

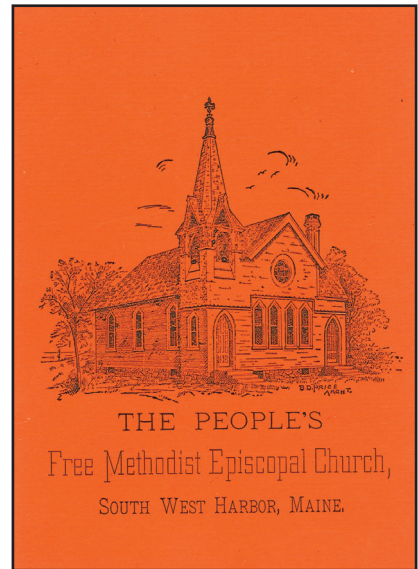


The lion's head which has become a characteristic of several violins made by Ralph.

**SOME INTERSTING FRAGMENTS OF HISTORY
THE PEOPLE'S FREE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Southwest Harbor**

The following items are in the archives at the Country Store Museum

The line drawing at right appeared on a bright orange card, on the reverse of which were spaces to be filled in, certifying that an individual or group had contributed a certain number of clapboards at 20 cents each. This would be an early time for a fund-raising technique which has often been used in more recent times. There is no information as to how much funding for the new church was raised from this device.



Pastoral Letter No. 30

Southwest Harbor, ME, Nov. 7, 1890

Friends of the Church:

The debt as reported in my Letter, No. 29, is \$1083.85. \$21.00 additional interest not known to the trustees at that date has been found due. I now make the following statement:

Debt as reported Sept. 25	\$ 1083.85	
Additional interest	<u>21.00</u>	
Total debt		\$ 1104.85

Paid interest	\$ 42.00	
Balance on decorations	36.92	
Balance on carpet	10.00	
On furnace, at Bangor	28.38	
To National Bank, at Ellsworth	50.00	
To S.W. Herrick	<u>37.55</u>	
Total amount paid		<u>\$ 204.85</u>
Balance of debt at this date		\$ 900.00

THE DEBT ITEMIZED AS FOLLOWS

To Savings Bank, Ellsworth	\$ 600.00	
To National Bank, Ellsworth	200.00	
To S.W. Herrick	75.00	
Balance on furnace	<u>25.00</u>	
Total debt		\$ 900.00

The 204.85 was paid by the following parties: O. Allen, \$51.00; Ladies' Circle, \$38.50; S.W. Herrick, \$27.70; R. McKay, \$15.00; A.J. Holmes and wife, \$10.00; R. Ash, J. Harmon, Lizzie Holmes, Mrs. O. Mills, W. Whitman, Fannie Savage, S.W. Treworgy, Nealy Bates, each \$5.00 amounting to \$40.00; Florence Clark, A.O. Gilley, Fannie Harmon, Lewis Holmes, Edith Lurvey, Mr. E. Richardson, Smith Savage, I. Whitmore, Ella King, Maud Holmes, Miss Seargent, Mary Verrill, people at Islesford, each small sums amounting to \$22.65.

Every member and friend of the church who has not yet contributed to the payment of this debt is requested to help a little.

Faithfully yours,

LE ROY BATES, *Pastor.*

Another Pastoral Letter, numbered 32 and dated Feb. 3, 1891, listed the following numbers of persons as "members and probationers of the Methodist Episcopal Church on the Southwest Harbor charge":

At People's Church, members	69
Probationers	14

At Somesville	3
At Bucksport	3
At Castine	3
At Waltham, Mass.	2
At Boothbay	1
At Boston, Mass.	1
At Seal Cove	4
At Bass Harbor	10
At Gott's Island	12
West Tremont	3
Sand Island Light	2
Centre	5
Pretty Marsh	<u>1</u>
	133

The photo below is the only other record we have of the existence of this church. Its address, by the way, was on Wesley Ave., which departs Main Street at the present Bicycle Shop (formerly Freeman's Store.) The building is no longer in existence. We would be happy to receive more information about this apparently thriving congregation, having its beginnings a decade before the start of the 20th century.

John MacDuffie, Editor



THE STEERSMEN

By Arthur Kellam

The following story was written at Placentia Island by Art Kellam, and submitted to Atlantic magazine for a short-story contest they were running in 1953. As the Kellams had only established their homestead at Placentia in 1949, it was remarkable that Art had found time to write, re-write, and polish this story in the hopes that it would be accepted by the editors of this national magazine.

Art's desk, which recently came to the Country Store Museum as a gift from Karen Holmes Godbout, contained a goodly batch of Art's writings. We introduce him with this first installment of the story "The Helmsmen." Ed.

Up aloft, a single gull hung for a moment on the autumn wind. Then, with a tilt of its wings, it was swept away, lifting and gliding, over the road and field and out across the harbor, to join in the clamor of its kind. The bird's grace and assurance in riding the wind charmed Vernon with a silent poetry; child-like, he admired it simply. Even in his features there remained, at thirty-four, something juvenile, and when he strained his gaze to follow the flight, his almost absurdly round, boyish face took on a brief grimace, as incongruously comic as a baby's sneer.

Turning, he closed the car door on which his hand had been resting, and walked briskly across the nearly empty village street. His usual jaunty, cheerful air was apparent as he mounted a few worn steps and entered the post office. She to whom he spoke recalled afterward that he was even humming a light tune, coming in.

"Good afternoon, Miss Patterson. I see a lot of the boys are back early, today; think it'll snow?"

She glanced out at the scattered group of boats rocking patiently at their moorings, and shivered. The water was steely gray, and the first white-caps were appearing in the harbor. Outside it, the sea boiled and thundered on a sunken ledge.

"Cold enough, but just wind, from that quarter. Some of the men didn't go. You can't blame them much, either, with lobsters at twenty-eight cents. You're late today though, Doctor.

There's a registered letter for you; just sign here, please."

He moved absently from the boxes toward her window, shuffling his mail, then paused.

"Just sign here, Doctor."

Impulsively, he covered a conspicuous black-bordered letter with some others, before reaching the window. In silence, he took from her a long, crisp envelope, only to frown in perplexity at it. Postmarked Boston, it bore in the upper corner the words "Preston, Duell and Niles, Attorneys at Law." He stood for a moment, weighing the letter in his hand, even pinching it a little.

The outer door was opened and shut loudly, and there came the clump of heavy rubber boots on the wooden floor. Abstractedly, Vernon turned away from the window, with a scarcely audible "Thank You" to the postmistress. Failing to acknowledge the gruff greeting from the fisherman just entered, he walked slowly out. It was observed that he was not humming, when he left.

(To be continued in a future issue. Ed.)

BOOKS FOR SALE!

Author	Title	Price	Plus 5% Tax
NEW!			
Capt. Ray Williamson	Maine Windjammer Cruises <i>Keeping the Tradition Alive</i>	48.00	50.40
	11" x 14" "coffee-table" book filled with photos of schooners in old and newer times, pursuing the windjammer trade pioneered by Capt. Frank Swift in the 1940's and thriving today.		
DVD			
Chummy Rich: Maine Boatbuilder		Members 14.95	15.70
	<i>The Building of Andromeda</i>		
Peter B. Blanchard III Photos by David Graham	We Were an Island <i>The Maine Life of Art & Nan Kellam</i>	27.95	29.35
Raymond C.S. Finney	Summers with Percy <i>A Biography of Percy Reed</i>	15.00	15.75
Dean Lunt	Hauling by Hand <i>History of Frenchboro</i>	25.00	26.25
Christina Gillis	Writing on Stone	24.95	26.20
Ruth Grierson (text) Richard Johnson (photos)	A is for Acadia	15.95	16.75
Wayne Libhart	The Jury is Out	10.00	10.50
	The Jury is Excused	14.95	15.70
Virginia Libhart	The Enchanted Land	8.95	9.40
	Carrie's Dream (ages 12-15)	8.95	9.40
	Carrie Makes Waves (ages 12-15)	8.95	9.40
	Makin' Do (ages 12-15)	8.95	9.40
Ruth Moore	The Weir	14.95	15.70
	Spoonhandle	13.95	14.65
	The Fire Balloon	15.00	15.75
	Candlemas Bay	10.95	11.50
	Speak to the Winds	10.95	11.50
	A Walk Down Main Street	10.95	11.50
	(NEW) Time's Web (<i>poems</i>)	13.95	14.65
<i>Native of Gott's Island, whose novels received the following plaudit from the New York Times:</i> "It is doubtful if any American writer has ever done a better job of communicating a people, their talk, their thoughts, their geography and their way of life."			
Sven Davisson, Ed.	Foley Craddock <i>Stories by Ruth Moore and Eleanor Mayo</i>	14.95	15.70
Sandy Phippen, Ed.	High Clouds <i>Letters of Ruth Moore</i>	16.95	17.80

Paul S. Richardson	The Creation and Growth of Acadia National Park	29.95	31.45
Wendell Seavey	Working the Sea <i>Autobiographical</i>	15.95	16.75
Sheldon "Smitty" Smith	Memories of a Lifetime (poems)	10.00	10.50
Craig Milner & Ralph Stanley	Ralph Stanley: Tales of a Maine Boat Builder	24.95	26.20
Tremont Women's Club Muriel Trask Davisson, Ed.	Two Tall Tales	9.95	10.45
<i>Serially written by 24 members of the Tremont Women's Club, 1940's and '50's</i>			

Book Orders should be sent to Tremont Historical Society, P.O. Box 215, Bass Harbor ME 04653. Please add shipping costs of \$3.00 per book, and 50 cents for each additional book in the same order.

The charge for shipping the Chummy Rich DVD is \$3.05.

We also have many copies of a booklet published in 1998, "The Historic Homes of the Town of Tremont," with photos and historical facts on 85 structures in the Town of Tremont. These booklets are available free on request. If mailed, we ask for a donation of \$1 to cover mailing costs.

The following Response Form gives readers of the Newsletter an opportunity to show support for our work in recording Tremont history and making various artifacts and materials available to the public through the Country Store Museum. Membership by payment of dues is only one way of doing this. Another is by responding to our Annual Appeal each year in late summer or early fall. For those who live in the area, we invite your offer of time and effort to help by staffing the Museum or work in other areas of interest to you. Please let us know of your interest in contributing to the fulfillment of our Mission.

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RESPONSE FORM

Please clip and mail to Tremont Historical Society, P.O. Box 215, Bass Harbor ME 04653

Yes ___ I/we wish to begin membership in the Tremont Historical Society

Yes ___ I/we wish to renew membership for another year.

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$10.00 per person for annual dues.

Please make checks payable to Tremont Historical Society

Dues, or contributions to the Annual Fund in any amount, provide membership through the next June.

Please list names of all persons for whom dues are paid, or all donors of contributions.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Check if this is a summer address _____ If different, please enter winter address below:

Address _____

E-mail address for meeting notices ___ or this Newsletter__ (please check which)

MISSION STATEMENT
Adopted June 24, 2002
By the Membership
Tremont Historical Society

The Tremont Historical Society shall be dedicated to preservation of the history of the towns of Tremont and Southwest Harbor and adjacent islands. It will achieve this mission by gathering, cataloging, preserving, and making available to the public historical materials, such as genealogies and information showing the growth and development of the towns, as well as artifacts.

SUMMER 2012 NEWSLETTER

Non-Profit
Organization
Postage Paid
Bass Harbor ME
04653
Permit No. 7

Tremont Historical Society
P.O. Box 215
Bass Harbor ME 04653