

MILBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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milbridgehistoricalsociety.org 207-546-4471

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Spring 2010

Night at the Museum

Authors, historians, and other experts will speak on topics as diverse as shipwreck exploration and Native American history as part of the Milbridge Historical Society's 2010 Night at the Museum speaker series.

Starting the season on Tuesday, April 13, Edwin Jessiman presents "Historical Research on Native Americans," covering history as well as genealogy.

On May 11 we explore the sea and underwater archaeology with "Diving for Shipwrecks," presented by Dive Master Harry Fish. Mr. Fish is a lifelong resident of Downeast Maine who made his first dive when he was 18. Since then, he has made hundreds of dives in Maine and the Caribbean. (Photo of undersea life at Hancock Point from cruisedowneast.com.)

We stay close to the sea with our June 8 program by Bill Waterhouse as he instructs us in the art of "Making Sea Salt." Following 20 years as a middle/high school teacher, Bill decided it was time for him to become the student. In Addison, Bill is now learning about sea salts and how challenging Mother Nature can be as a teacher. Bill will share what he has learned and what challenges remain in the process of collecting those flavorful crystals from the waters of Wohoa Bay.

The 1866 transoceanic tale of 35 families and the resulting Maine Friendship House museum, "Jaffa American Colony," is told by Jean Holmes on July 13. Built in 1866 by the Mark T. Wentworth family and restored in 2002 by Jean and Reed Holmes, this wooden house was brought from Maine on the sailing vessel the Nellie Chapin, along with other families and their wooden houses. They established the American Colony in Jaffa.

On August 10 the traditional pot luck supper is followed by a brief annual meeting and election of society officers. (Location to be determined.) Then author Sanford "Sandy" Phippen will delight us with "Down East Stories." Mr. Phippen grew up in Hancock and graduated from Sumner Memorial High School and the University of Maine. He received his M.A. degree from Syracuse University. An English teacher for 46 years at both the high school and college levels, he now teaches at the University of Maine. He is the author of 12 books and he hosted two TV series for MPBN: RFD Maine and A Good Read.

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Curator's Report

In December, 2009, we received five historic building plaques from Robert Leonard of Ould Colony Artisans (Farmington, Maine). The signs are beautifully made and carry a silhouette of a three-masted schooner. A grant from the Robert N. Haskell & Gladys M. Stetson Fund paid for the first five signs and will pay for two more. A very generous gift, received from Terry Hussey, will allow us to have many more plaques made. Researching the history of various homes and buildings has been very time-consuming and frustrating but very exciting when we can pin down the name of the person who had the house built and the date. Should anyone have any information about older homes in the Milbridge, I would be happy to hear from you at 546-3764.

The task of accounting for every item listed in our computer database continues. Hopefully the day will come when the list is accurate and properly organized.

The Women's Work exhibit will continue until the autumn. This summer's major exhibit will be "Fun! An Historic View of Toys, Games and Recreation." There will also be new additions to our seafaring history exhibits.

We always need helpers for various indoor and outdoor projects and tasks. Please consider volunteering. Even an hour or two can be helpful and would be deeply appreciated.

Lee-Lee Schlegel, Curator

A Page from The Milbridge Register, 1905

Milbridge, incorporated as a town July 14, 1848, is situated in the southwestern part of Washington County, thirty miles west-south-west of Machias. By water route, the town is 207 miles from Portland, 127 miles from Rockland, 43 miles from Machiasport, and 197 miles from Bangor. Milbridge is bounded on the north by Cherryfield, on the south by the Narraguagus Bay, on the east by this same bay and Harrington, and on the west by Steuben and Cherryfield.

In size it is one of the smallest towns in the state. The township is long and narrow — a mere "slice" of a township as it were — and is cut into two parts by the Narraguagus River, which travels its entire length and finally, gains the Ocean....

The first white persons to set foot on Milbridge soil were, in all probability, early voyagers. Who these persons were, and the date of their arrival, we do not know. Captain Bartholomew Gosnold made a voyage along the coast in 1602, Martin Pring in 1603 and Captain John Smith in 1614. Pring, so history tells us, made an exact account of all these harbors and rivers along our coast. As he explored other small rivers, it is but natural that he should have sailed a short distance up the Narraguagus. A traditional story says that Captain John Smith landed on Dyer's Island, when in pursuit of an Indian, who had fled hither with his wife and child.

Again, fishermen may have landed on our shores, for, prior to 1700, this sturdy class of men were prying all along our coast in pursuit of their occupation. It was their custom to go abroad during the summer months, but to return to their settled homes when winter came on. These facts, although they do not tell us who the first visitor was, yet they are sufficient to convince us that this region, now Milbridge, was visited by the whites at a very early date.

The date of the first permanent settlement in Milbridge, by the Whites, is uncertain. Settlements of short duration were made at Calais in 1604, Machias in 1644, and Eastport in 1772; but no permanent settlement was made in those towns prior to the following dates, Calais, 1763; Machias, 1764; and Eastport, 1780. The name of the first settler in our town is not positively known, as different parts of the town were settled about the same time.

A settlement was made at Mill River at a very early date. The first settler there was John Dinsmore, who came from Dover, New Hampshire to this town in company with Ichabod Willey, the first settler in Cherryfield. The date of their arrival is claimed by their descendants to be 1756. The Dinsmores of this and other towns in our county are descendants of Mr. Dinsmore. The Strouts, Campbells, Rays, Putmans and Prebies were also early settlers along this river. The old Campbell homestead is now occupied by Mrs. Hannah Kennedy, and is said to be over 100 years old. Ira Strout's residence, near Mrs. Kennedy, is the old Strout place. This is probably one of the oldest, if not the oldest house now standing in town. Its age is placed at approximately 150 years.

The Strouts were the first to arrive at Back Bay. Joseph Strout, known as Deacon Strout, settled there about 1762. Others of his near relatives soon followed. Numerous descendants of these early Strouts are now living in our town.

(To be continued in the fall newsletter)

Artists Showcase

The Milbridge Historical Society is pleased to continue its support of area artists with displays in the museum meeting room. This summer the following artists will be featured:

June: Pat Sharp, Milbridge, Maine. Ms. Sharp received a grant from the Maine Arts Commission in support of her Energy of Water painting series.

July: Larry Allen, of Windham, ME, "Photographs of Lighthouses."

August: "My Maine Blue," Group Invitational Exhibit of Local Artists on the theme. This will be something quite different than the usual one person art show. Local artists and artists who have shown their work at the museum in years past have been invited by the Arts Coordinator to participate. Each work will be the artist's own personal interpretation of the theme. A variety of mediums and artists' interpretations will make for a very interesting show.

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He was nominated for an Emmy Award and has received a number of other awards for both his teaching and writing. His books include the best-selling *Kitchen Boy*, *The Police Know Everything*, and *People Trying to be Good*. He is also the editor of the literary magazine *Puckerbrush Review*.

In September we are excited to participate with the Cherryfield Narraguagus Historical Society in a Living History Day. Please check our web site for more information as we are currently in the planning stages.

Our final program on October 12 features food historian and author Sandy Oliver, who will educate us with “Baked Beans to Whoopie Pies: A Bird’s-Eye View of Maine’s Food History.” Sandy has been active in food and food history for 39 years, starting in 1971 at Mystic Seaport Museum, where she developed a fireplace cooking program in an 1830s house. After moving to Maine in 1988, Sandy wrote *Saltwater Foodways: New Englanders and Their Foods at Sea and Ashore in the 19th Century*. She is also coauthor of *The Food of Colonial and Federal America* and *Giving Thanks: Thanksgiving History and Recipes from Pilgrims to Pumpkin Pie*. Besides food history work, Sandy is a freelance food writer with the column *Taste Buds* appearing each weekend in the *Bangor Daily News* and regular columns in *Maine Boats, Homes, and Harbors* magazine and *The Working Waterfront*. Sandy and her husband Jamie MacMillan have lived on Islesboro for twenty years where they have a large garden, chickens, and sometimes raise pigs.

Unless otherwise indicated, programs are at 7 p.m. at the museum, with refreshments to follow. They are, as always, free and open to the public.

Other Museum News...

Our **summer yard sale** is a great fundraiser and again we send out a plea for your “stuff.” Gary Willey will gladly pick up your good quality, still usable goods (sorry, no electronic items) or arrange a time for your drop off at our storage building. Call him at 546-2040 and remember us when it’s time for spring cleaning....The 2011 **MHS calendar**, available this summer, finishes up the military series and features veterans from 1956 through present conflicts....It’s not too early to call Donna Cirone at 546-2701 to sign up as a summer **museum host** and, yes, we will train you....Be sure to check out **new gift shop items** this summer, including quilted bags made by Susan Moore (see photo) and folk woodpecker yard art.



Treasurer's Report

Considering the continuing national economic slowdown, the Historical Society is fortunate to be doing well financially. At the end of 2009, we had a checkbook balance of \$12,794.53, and \$55,227.05 in various Certificates of Deposit, for a total of \$68,021.58 for all assets. This reflects a gain of \$15,426.75 over 2008, when we had total assets of \$52,594.83 at the end of the year. A significant portion of this gain can be attributed to the outstanding generosity of many people and several organizations who gave a total of \$12,211.46 in donations and bequests. Our Gift Shop also increased its sales during 2009, selling almost \$5,000 worth of goods compared to \$4,403.26 in 2008. The biggest fund-raising activity of the year, our annual Yard Sale, brought in a total of \$2,661.25 – this is compared to \$1,489.22 for the 2008 Yard Sale. At the same time, however, our 2009 income from our Membership Dues dropped \$687.35 compared to our 2008 Dues collection.

While we experienced an overall increase in income during 2009, we were also fortunate throughout 2009 to be able to lower some of our major expenditures. With the lower price of fuel oil, our heating costs dropped from \$1,586.64 in 2008 to \$1,246.45 for 2009. Similarly, our Buildings & Grounds costs dropped from \$2,588.49 in 2008, to \$2,279.83 in 2009. And, thanks to Mother Nature, our snow-plowing costs dropped from \$1,062 in 2008 to \$759 in 2009.

As we're now entering 2010, we are preparing a 2010 Historical Society budget which takes into consideration the trends we've recently experienced in both income and expenses. We expect that there will be fund-raising initiatives in 2010 which will augment our income but, at the same time, we know that there will always be some maintenance expenses, such as exterior painting of our building and the refurbishment of our outside signs, which will need to be paid for. We can only hope that we don't encounter any major unanticipated costs. Additionally, a recently completed audit of our books shows they are in good order.

John Schlegel, Treasurer

In Memoriam

Thelma Kennedy

Barbara Schuppien

Robert Sargent

Robert Sprague

Madeline Sawyer

Harold E. West

**Milbridge Historical Society 2009-2010
Officers**

Gary Willey.....President
Dale Schevenius.....Vice President
Ellen Strout.....Secretary
John Schlegel.....Treasurer
Alice Beal.....Asst. Treasurer
Lee-lee Schlegel.....Curator

Board Members

Laurie Hall.....Peter Sawyer.....Ramona West
Marilyn Dow...Brenda Duggan.....Paula Gillen

2010 Programs

March 9.....Ice Cream Social and Narraguagus Singers Concert
(cancelled due to illness)
April 13..Edwin Jessiman, "Historical Research on Native Americans"
May 11.....Harry Fish, "Diving for Shipwrecks"
June 8.....Bill Waterhouse, "Making Sea Salt"
July 13.....Jean Holmes, "Jaffa American Colony"
August 10.....Annual Meeting, Sandy Phippen, "Down East Stories"
(location to be determined)
September.....Living History Day in conjunction with
the Cherryfield Narraguagus Historical Society
Oct. 12.....Sandy Oliver, "Baked Beans to Whoopie Pies: A
Bird's-Eye View of Maine's Food History"
Unless otherwise indicated, programs are at 7 p.m. at the museum.

Membership Renewal

Your dues help keep the museum running and the programs ongoing. If your address label doesn't say 2010 or Life, please catch up and send in your dues. As a special thank you for being a member, please see page 5 for a limited-time offer.

Name _____

Summer Address _____

Other Address _____

Phone number(s) _____ Email Address _____

Please circle one: I DO/DO NOT wish to view newsletters on line and save the MHS printing and postage costs.

Dues: \$10 per year, lifetime membership still \$100.

Enclosed is \$ _____ for 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 Life (\$100) Extra Donation \$ _____

To ensure proper updates, please forward your membership dues and any inquiries to the attention of Laurie Hall. If there are questions, you may call Laurie at 546-2055, leave a message at 546-4471, or email info@milbridgehistoricalsociety.org.

MILBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM GIFT SHOP

Special Members Only Sale!

In appreciation for your continued support, we are offering 20% off any one item from the below list to members in good standing on orders received by June 1, 2010. Enter the 20% discount amount at bottom of order form and please note, we are not able to discount tax or shipping. Please make payment to MHS and send check to PO Box 194, Milbridge, ME 04658. Any questions, call Laurie Hall at 546-2055 or Paula Gillen at 546-3424, or email info@milbridgehistoricalsociety.org.

Qty.	Books	Cost	Tax	Total		
	<i>1881 Washington County Atlas</i>	\$22.50	\$1.13			
	<i>1881 Hancock County Atlas</i>	\$22.50	\$1.13			
	<i>Civil War</i> - booklet	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	<i>Ships & Shipbuilding</i> - booklet	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	<i>Making It Downeast</i> - booklet	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	<i>Living & Working Downeast</i> - booklet	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	<i>Caskets Sold</i> - booklet	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	<i>Imagining Maine</i> - paperback	\$14.95	\$0.75			
	Wall Maps					
	Milbridge 1794	\$8.00	\$0.40			
	Milbridge 1850 with Business Directory	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	Milbridge 1881	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	Milbridge, Cherryfield & Steuben	\$8.50	\$0.43			
	Family Tree Charts					
	Our Family Tree	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	Maternal Chart	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	Paternal Chart	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	Lobster T's & Sweatshirts - Adult					
	Hooded Sweatshirts: M gray or light blue, XL gray or navy	\$32.00	\$1.60			
	Hooded Sweatshirts: XXL navy	\$36.00	\$1.80			
	Sweatshirts: M brown, XL light blue	\$26.00	\$1.30			
	Sweatshirts: XXL gray or navy	\$30.00	\$1.50			
	T-Shirts: Large coral	\$16.00	\$0.80			
	Schooner T's & Sweatshirts - Adult					
	Sweatshirts: M gray, S forest,cranberry,white,navy	\$15.00	\$0.75			
	Golf Shirts, Short Sleeve: S forest, cranberry	\$8.00	\$0.40			
	Golf Shirts, Long Sleeve: S gray, forest, tomato, M tomato, XL gray, tomato	\$11.00	\$0.55			
	T-Shirts: S gray, tourquoise, cranberry, tomato	\$6.00	\$0.30			
	Deduct amount of 20% discount on one item					
	Shipping (see chart)					
			Total	\$		

Shipping/Handling:

\$20 or less: 4.99

\$20.01-\$35 6.99

\$35.01-\$50 8.99

\$50.01-\$65 10.99

\$65.01+ 12.99

Limited Quantities

on T's and Sweatshirts.

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From the Diaries of E. Philip Sawyer of Milbridge, Maine

I was eleven years old when my father Elmer Sawyer died and the Sawyer Bros. yard was leased to Sawyer Shipbuilding Corp. and my recollections of shipbuilding only take in a few years of my youth.

The shipyard consisted of an office building with store, blacksmith shop, the largest building for carpenters and joiners on first floor and mould loft on second, a smaller building attached used for oaking shed and storage, a mill for sawing, planing long lumber, housing a ship band saw, a lath for turning trees, nails (tunnels), a shed attached to the mill building for the rotary saw with only a roof. Power was furnished by a steam boiler and steam engine....

There were three of us boys who were always together, most of the time playing at the shipyard, Roger Sawyer, Reginald Strout, and myself. On several occasions we took packages of shredded coconut from the company store. We didn't consider it stealing, just borrowing. We used to go under an old house which was supported on cable reels to eat the loot. There was just about enough room under the house to crawl under. One day there was a loud noise, which sounded like a clap of thunder. The old house had fallen off the reels and was flat on the ground. This was the end of our shredded coconut and we never took anything again. To this day I can't look at a package of coconut.

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