

Celebrating 5 Years on East Elm Street

Yarmouth History Center Newsletter

Spring 2018

118 East Elm Street, Yarmouth, Maine

207-846-6259

A Tree Grows in Yarmouth

The mission of the History Center is to collect, preserve, and share the history of Yarmouth and the area of Ancient North Yarmouth. This history comes to us in many forms, from physical objects like photographs and documents to intangible items like oral histories and family stories. Although we often have a wealth of supplemental information to help us understand and authenticate an artifact, it is sometimes difficult to find sources to flesh out the stories that comes to us as memories or local lore. As intriguing and tantalizing as these stories often are, we make every attempt to find other sources that corroborate their details, but sometimes that's a challenge, so we look to our community for help. Recently, our curiosity was piqued by stories and rumors about Yarmouth's champion trees, especially the catalpa trees in town. Perhaps you can help shed some light on the mystery of Yarmouth's catalpa trees!

Champion trees are recognized as the largest living specimen of their species in a particular area, often a state. Many states, including Maine, keep records of these champion trees which are catalogued and searchable in online databases. Yarmouth's most famous champion tree was Herbie, an American elm.

In 2010, Herbie succumbed to Dutch elm disease after many years of care by the late tree warden Frank Knight. Herbie's story gained national attention and Knight's work with the tree is well documented. In addition to Herbie, Knight knew of other great specimen trees growing in Yarmouth and he brought that to the attention of the Maine Forest Service. As a result of Mr. Knight's work, in 1998 Yarmouth received certification for six champion trees.

Two of these champion trees, the Turkey oak and the scarlet oak, are part of a prized collection of trees gifted to the Merrill Memorial Library in 1907 by George Hammond, manager of the Forest Paper Company. Hammond was on the Library's building committee, a member of the Library's first Board of Trustees, and the Library's president from 1905-1907. It was Frank Knight's opinion that Hammond's gift assembled the most unique collection of oaks in the state of Maine. Today, as you walk along the sidewalk in front of the library these trees have labels identifying their species: Turkey oak, chestnut oak, bur oak, swamp white oak, scarlet oak, and shingle oak. The History Center's col-

lection includes documentation of these oaks as well as Knight's research identifying each species of oak and a recorded oral history of Knight's recollections of the trees.



Above: Maine State Champion Certificate for the Northern Catalpa

Unfortunately, some of the champion trees in Yarmouth do not have the same level of documentation as Herbie and the Library's oaks. In the Center's collection is a certificate naming a northern catalpa tree in Yarmouth as a Maine state champion. The story of who planted it, when, where, and why still remains a curious piece of town lore. The catalpa is a stately tree growing up to 80 feet high. It has large, heart-shaped leaves and blooms in the springtime with great clusters of fragrant, trumpet-shaped flowers. In the fall, the tree produces long bean-like seed pods that hang from its branches.

Today, we know of three old catalpa trees growing in Yarmouth. The lore surrounding these trees offers two explanations for their existence. One story involves seven friends receiving catalpa seedlings as graduation gifts and planting them across town sometime around 1916. A second narrative tells of Yarmouth resident Pearl True and her friends receiving catalpa seedlings from her uncle, who became enamored of the tree during his travels in northern Europe. He returned from his journey with the intention to grow and distribute seedlings, giving some to Pearl who, along with her friends, planted them around Yarmouth. Pearl's tree still stands in the front of her childhood home on East Main Street.

It's difficult to know which story is true. Perhaps both are! We had hoped to find additional stories or letters to add detail to the origins of Yarmouth's catalpas, but our search has so far come up empty. Do you have information or documentation regarding Yarmouth's catalpa trees? Perhaps a photo, letter, or remembrance? We would love to hear from you! In the meantime, keep an eye out for Yarmouth's beautiful trees and consider them part of our shared history. Our thanks to Dick Knight, Tom Reinsborough, and Sue Bogle Krauss for sharing what they know about Yarmouth's catalpa trees.



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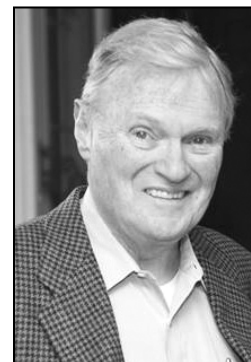
From the Chair

Hello! I'm Bill Nugent, recently elected as Chairman of the Yarmouth Historical Society's 15-member Board of Trustees.

When my family and I moved here 33 years ago, we too became part of this area's history, a story that extends back many centuries and which is collected, preserved, and made available to all at the Yarmouth History Center. We joined a history that included millennia of activity by original peoples, 17th century European settlers, ship builders and shop keepers, fishers and traders, paper makers and small manufacturers, farmers and school teachers. Distinct and vibrant as Yarmouth was and is, it also was tied to (and active in) the larger community through coastal shipping, railroads, trolley, and automobiles. Our story is still being written—by each Yarmouth resident, including you.

You can see the physical evidence and read the documents of our story at the Yarmouth History Center. Here we gather and preserve the remaining strands of our story, present to the public programs which tell that story, and offer you the opportunity to learn more about it.

While our displays and programs are open to all, we encourage you to learn more by becoming a member of the Society, by offering suggestions as to how we might better serve the community, and by keeping us in mind just before you discard that very old, Yarmouth-linked object that has been cluttering your attic or garage for so long. Bring it by; maybe it's an important additional piece of Yarmouth's heritage.



Bill Nugent



In Memoriam Mary Estelle Blake 1921-2017

Mary Estelle Blake was a life-long resident of Yarmouth and the last descendent of six generations of the Brown family who, since the mid-1700s, resided on Brown's Point. After graduating from North Yarmouth Academy in 1938, Mary Estelle worked for the New England Telephone and Telegraph Co. In 1945, she became chief telephone operator for Yarmouth, until dial service was installed in 1953. She continued to work for the telephone company at the Portland office until her retirement in 1982. The last position she held, at the age of 92, was with the town of Yarmouth as a crossing guard on the corner of Main Street and the Elms. Active in the community throughout her entire life, Mary Estelle Blake held the position of treasurer for the Fortnightly Club for several decades and secretary of the Riverside Cemetery Association. Mary Estelle was a devoted volunteer at the First Parish Congregational Church and a patron of the Historical Society. She generously shared with the Society her family's history and artifacts from her family's life in Yarmouth, ensuring the preservation of the Blake and Brown family legacies.

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Marian McCue
In memory of James C. Saunders, Jr.
Laura Lepine
In memory of Phebe Snow
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In and Around the Yarmouth History Center



Top: The 317 Community Music Ensemble
Above: The dancers celebrating the end of another session of dancing with food and, for some, costumes.

Top: Nori Schneider welcomes Nanaka Yamada
Above: Host parents and chaperones enjoy the welcome program for the visiting students.

English Country Dancing

The History Center and 317 Community Music's English Country Dance program is now in its 7th session. Not only has the number of dancers increased, so has the size of the band that plays for the classes. If you are interested in checking out this traditional form of group dance, drop in on a class anytime throughout the eleven week session. Dancers (individuals or couples) at any level can join in at anytime. See the Yarmouth History Center's website for details.

Student Exchange

The Center was the first stop for a group of Japanese middle school students visiting the area for a cultural and educational exchange sponsored by the Casco Bay Japan Exchange Program. The program includes students from Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Yarmouth, and Namioka, Japan. Namioka is a small, city located on the northern point of Honshu. The program offers the visiting students opportunities to experience a new culture, create lifelong friendships, and generate international goodwill.



Above: The History Center's Trolley Bridge selfie station

Discover the Royal

In October the History Center joined North Yarmouth Historical Society, New Gloucester Historical Society, Durham Historical Society, and Skyline Farm to host the Royal River Conservation Trust's Discover the Royal River event. The event was a self-led exploration of points along the Royal River where selfie stations were set up for adventurers to snap photos of themselves and record their visit.

Participants who submitted photos of themselves at the stations received a chance to win a Maine State Park pass. The History Center hosted four selfie stations. The event inspired many to visit both Royal River Park and the History Center.

In and Around the Yarmouth History Center



Top left: Lynne Manson Gawtry and host committee member Jenn Wilson.

Top right: Guests enjoying some shared history of Camp Hammond from historian Alan Hall (inset)

Above left: Guests Deb and Sam Barouch enjoy the evening revisiting the venue of their wedding.

Above right: Fellow host committee members, left to right: Vesta Vaughan Rand, Julie Benavides, and Barb and Rick Parkhurst.

An Evening at Yarmouth's Camp Hammond

The Historical Society hosted a gala fundraiser, Cocktails at the Camp, on November 17, 2017. The event took place at Camp Hammond, a historic house built around 1889 in the heart of Yarmouth village by George Hammond, manager of the Forest Paper Company pulp mill. The house is full of fascinating architectural details and was built using mill methods to help ensure its survival in the event of a fire. Attendees enjoyed the wood-paneled interior, classic cocktails, and hors d'oeuvres inspired by historic recipes.

Over 150 people participated in the event, which raised funds to support the operations and programs of the Yarmouth History Center. Executive Director Katie Worthing remarked, "This event was a really fun way for the organization to reach out into the community, celebrate our town's history in a fabulous historic home, and raise funds and awareness for our programs and collection. We are lucky to have such a supportive community around us."

All of us at the History Center would like to extend a warm thank you to everyone who joined us "at the Camp!" Thanks also to our media sponsor, Maine Home + Design, and our event sponsor, Estabrook's.

Upcoming Events and Programs

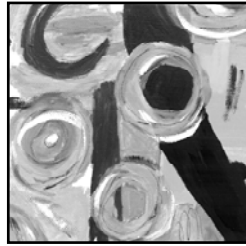
The lecture series is sponsored by the Leon and Lisa Gorman Fund

March

Friday, March 9, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

“Abstraction” by Leslie Hamren

Art Opening and Exhibit through April
Free



Thursday, March 15, 7:00 pm

Royal River Film Series

Penguin Counters

Free

Film Series Sponsored by:

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Tuesday, March 20, 7:00 pm

Historic Garden Design

Join Erik Wochholz, Curator of Historic Landscapes at the Strawberry Banke museum, as he explores the historical origins and traditions of landscape design in New England. Topics of discussion will include a timeline of garden design, reflections on the history of medicinal plants, culinary food crops, and the diversity of ornamental flower design in early America.

Free for Yarmouth Historical Society Members and \$5.00 all others.



Saturday, March 31, 10:30 am - 12:00 pm

Happy 5th Birthday Yarmouth History Center!

Bring the family for cupcakes, a scavenger hunt, and a Yarmouth trivia contest. Stop in after Yarmouth Community Services' annual Easter Egg Hunt.

Free

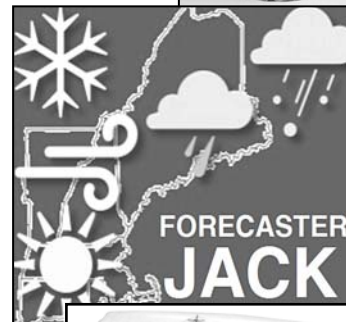


Saturday, March 31, 2:00 pm

Yarmouth Stories with Forecaster Jack

Join local online weather reporting celebrity Jack Sillin for a talk about the weather and how he became a self proclaimed “weather geek.”

Free



April



Saturday, April 7, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

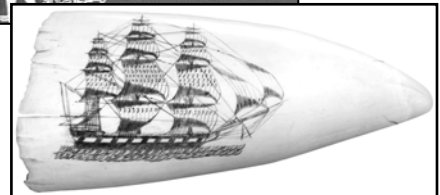
Antiques Appraisal Day (see back page for details)

Tuesday, April 24, 7:00 pm

American Whaling in the Age of Sail

Yarmouth History Center will host Curt Martin, independent historian and lecturer, who will speak about the historical development and economic importance of the whaling fishery. Mr. Martin will cover all aspects of the American whaling industry: the risks associated with whaling, the important species hunted, the products of whaling, the whaling vessels, the crew and life on board, the leisure arts of whale fishermen, and finally, the decline and death of the whaling industry in the United States.

Free for Yarmouth Historical Society Members and \$5.00 all others.



All events take place at the Yarmouth History Center unless otherwise noted

Celebrating 5 Years

Join us for cupcakes on Saturday March 31 at 10:30 am, following Yarmouth Community Services' Easter Egg Hunt in Royal River Park, as we celebrate the History Center and Stonewall Gallery's 5th year! Since opening the doors in January 2013 the Center has welcomed over 30,000 visitors.

The Stonewall Gallery, created as a fundraiser for the Society, has hosted 32 art exhibits and served as exhibit space for local history displays.

We would like to thank all the contributors who donated to the Capital Campaign and made the Yarmouth History Center possible. Come visit and see the wonderful place you helped create.



Above from left to right: Board Members Christie Harriman, Ben Soule, Julie Benavides, Binks Colby-George, David Ray, Art Bell, and Tim Wheaton (out of view Chuck Murray and Eric Leinwand)

Yankee Ingenuity

During a recent power outage, the Society's Board of Trustees held their January meeting by lantern light. Board member Julie Benavides was leaving home as the lights went out so grabbed her battery-powered camping lanterns to take with her to the meeting. Julie's quick thinking allowed the meeting to go on as the daylight faded and the power remained unrestored throughout the meeting and long after the group adjourned.

From the Collection:

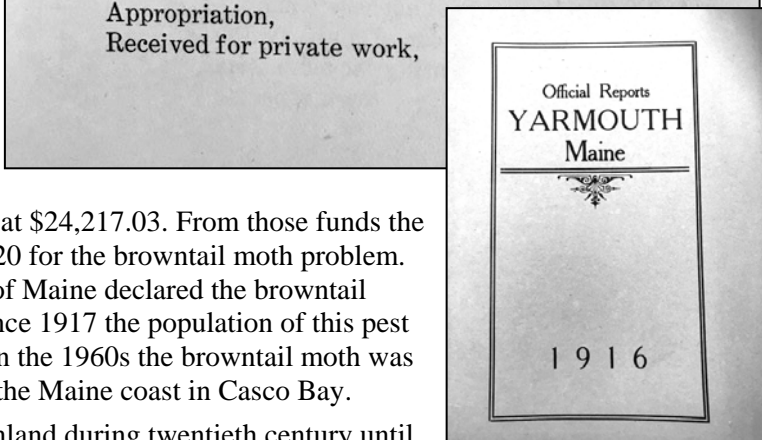
This time of year we look forward to spring with some excitement for the warm temperatures and absence of snow. While researching a member's query we stumbled upon a reminder of a not-so-wonderful harbinger of spring, the browntail moth! This nuisance is not new to Yarmouth.

The browntail moth was accidentally introduced into Somerville, Massachusetts from Europe in 1897. By 1913, the insect had spread throughout New England and the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

In Yarmouth's Official Reports of 1916 the appropriations for 1915 were recorded at \$24,217.03. From those funds the record shows the town's expense of \$697.20 for the browntail moth problem. In 1916, the Revised Statutes of the State of Maine declared the browntail moth a public nuisance in all its stages. Since 1917 the population of this pest slowly decreased due to natural controls. In the 1960s the browntail moth was limited to Cape Cod and a few islands off the Maine coast in Casco Bay.

Occasional outbreaks occurred on the mainland during twentieth century until the 1990s when the browntail moth again became a problem along the southern Maine coast. Today the pest continues to be an unwelcome sign of spring.

Brown Tail Moth Account.	
Allan Drinkwater,	\$252.70
C. A. Quint,	27.00
Archie Arsenault,	2.00
Harold Sawyer, Islands,	53.12
A. F. Tilton, postals—printing moth notices,	5.25
	<hr/>
	\$340.07
Unexpended,	357.13
	<hr/>
	\$697.20

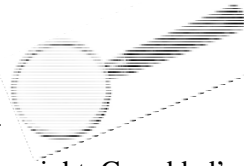


Appraisal Day

April 7, 10am - 2pm

Gather up Auntie Matilda's glass paperweight, Granddad's vintage walking stick, and the stoneware fish platter you picked up at the tag sale last summer, and bring them to the 3rd Annual Appraisal Day. This event offers the community an opportunity to bring their treasures to the History Center to be evaluated by local antique and art appraisers.

Prices: \$10 for 1 item; \$18 for 2 items; \$25 for 3 items. The first item is free for current members of Yarmouth Historical Society. Limit of 3 items per person. Single items only. Please, no large collections.



Sharing a Memory

Before the new year, the History Center received a call from John Haley of Maryland. He had received a copy of the Society's 2018 calendar as a gift and called to express his delight in seeing his parents in September's 1940 grammar school class photo.

Sweethearts 'forever' Fred Haley and Ellen Whittemore lived in Yarmouth and were married for over 50 years. John Haley, who grew up in Yarmouth, said he had the best of both worlds having spent his childhood in the Haley house on Main Street (a hint of the house is seen on the right in our April photograph) and the Whittemore Farm on the North Road in Yarmouth. Thank you for sharing your history with us John!

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