

Yarmouth History Center Newsletter

Fall 2020

118 East Elm Street, Yarmouth, Maine

207-846-6259

Historic Events in Yarmouth: We're LIVING Through Them

By Anna Wallace, Yarmouth History Center Intern



Above Left: At the front door of Yarmouth's InterMed YHS senior Annabel Patch takes temperatures of patients before they enter the building. Above Center: Masks made by Vanessa Michaud and a mask created for the YHS class of 2020. Above Right: Sign of the times, local merchants offer touchless and mobile pickup during the statewide closures.

This summer, I have had the wonderful opportunity to participate in an internship with the Yarmouth Historical Society. This year I got the unique opportunity to look into historical events in Yarmouth from a different perspective: A FUTURE perspective. I took on a project that focused on finding different ways to document Yarmouth during these especially uncertain times this year. I explored how our small, coastal town in southern Maine adjusted to the world wide issues of the COVID-19 pandemic and even touched on recent events with the Black Lives Matter Movement spiraling across the nation. Along with this project, I was also lucky enough to be able to go in-office when given the chance to help out with some Yarmouth history based projects.

Starting with my self-based project I immediately turned to researching ways other museums and historians were tackling this same task. One particular article I found the most intriguing was written about New York City: the heart of the pandemic for a long time. The article mentioned collecting hazmat suits, medical gear, taking photographs of

empty streets, documenting people's stories, and more. I wanted to take a similar approach to telling Yarmouth's story, which is extremely different from New York City's. I started taking many pictures around town, gathered any documents online I could find about Yarmouth, and even got the chance to interview someone with a local business.

My most memorable part of the project was getting to talk to Vanessa Michaud, a woman who owns her own tailoring business in town. Her professional experience from working on Broadway in past years has made her a public interest of the town. However, once COVID hit, business plummeted for her until she realized there was something else people were in need of that she could offer: masks. Masks have become a new normal for all because of the pandemic and by adjusting her business to match the pandemic she started working long hours and made more money just in a couple months than what she normally makes in a year. All while staying at home.

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From the Chair

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members.

As the days grow shorter and cooler, we begin to wonder how face masks, physical distancing, travel quarantines, and COVID-19 tests will color the months ahead. It helps to remind oneself that this community has been tested before by fire, flood, disease, and war.

And that thanks to organizations like the Historical Society and the Village Improvement Society, our village still offers many historical homes and buildings that have sheltered families through it all. A stroll down Portland, Pleasant, Main, Center, South, or West Elm, invites one to wonder about those who have come before us, and the challenges that they faced and survived. And perhaps we can find some inspiration to help us through the coming winter.

This is one of the ways that the Yarmouth Historical Society continues to give to our community, in addition to our beautiful History Center, and programming.

My heartfelt thanks for your support as a member, annual fund donor, gift shop customer, or program attendee. It is wonderful that we have each other during times like this. Please look us up when you are looking for something to do over the next few months. We'd love to connect and share our stories. Be well.



Chuck Murray

You are invited to Yarmouth Historical Society's

Annual Meeting
Tuesday, October 20th at 6:45pm

ALL ONLINE

at 7pm Featured Speaker
Cathleen Miller

Education and Outreach Archivist
University of New England's
Maine Women Writers Collection
(See page 6 for lecture details)

Continued from page 1

Documenting history can be done in various ways and can tell many different stories. While the pandemic has brought a lot of hardships in our lives, in some ways it may have changed our lives for the better as well. Hearing Vanessa's perspective made me think about this more. This was certainly a project I could have taken several different directions with and I knew the sky was the limit. With the limited six week time period I had, I felt a great purpose in contributing to the Yarmouth History Center and to the future generations who want to know more about how we lived. 2020 has definitely been a year for the history books.



Above: Our summer intern, YHS senior Anna Wallace.



Above and below: New to the collection and considered for the calendar, photographs by former Yarmouth resident and photographer Arthur Schuh.



Calendar In Progress

For over thirty years Yarmouth Historical Society has produced a calendar of historical photographs and images from the Society's collection. The calendar is the organization's longest running fundraiser and offers images from Yarmouth's distant, and sometimes not so distant, past.

Collecting images for the calendar is a year-long process. Throughout the year the Center receives numerous research requests and those inquiries never fail to turn up a great image to feature in the calendar. The Center is also fortunate to have new acquisitions donated to the collection; many times there are photographs donated that become instant favorites and are earmarked for the next calendar. Copies of these new images are placed in a growing file along with the other staff recommendations to be considered for the calendar.

In August our museum assistant, Shelby Bryant, gathered the collection of images from the accumulating file and began the difficult task of narrowing down the number of images to thirteen. Many factors are taken into consideration: condition of the photograph, orientation of the photograph, and subject of the photo. The photographs are researched to make sure a detailed caption can be created to accompany it in the calendar. Then Shelby takes the photographs into the design and production stage.

It is very satisfying to choose photographs that our visitors and supporters find a connection to. It's thrilling when a visitor stops by to share their story about a photograph in the calendar. In previous years, our calendars brought back memories of bike rides to the corner store, mischievous tales from teenage years, and recollections of the names of long lost friends.

The Society's annual calendar has become a tradition for many Yarmouth residents. While purchasing calendars our visitors have told us about their siblings living far away who look forward to their yearly calendar gift, spouses who look for the calendar in their holiday stocking, and friends whose workmates anticipate the gift to replace last year's calendar hanging in their offices. This year, with so many traditions being altered, postponed, or cancelled, we are thrilled to still be able to offer the Historical Society's 2021 calendar. We would like to thank our business members and calendar sponsors for their generous support, support that makes the production of this calendar possible.

Thank you!

Collecting History

An update from Director Katie Worthing

With this newsletter, staff members share stories of the projects that have kept us busy and inspired throughout our spring pandemic closure and the highly unusual summer that followed. We have all been busy! Among her other tasks, Maura has been carefully putting together biographies of some of the occupants of the Baptist Cemetery in preparation for this year's virtual Stroll Haunted Yarmouth (see page 7). Karen has enthusiastically thrown herself into the minutiae of our databases, with an eye toward improving them in the future. Shelby gathered photographs and tackled the design and production of the 2021 calendar (see page 3). And our summer intern, Anna, embraced the uncertainty of a COVID-era internship and worked independently to collect artifacts, photos, and oral histories from this particular moment in Yarmouth's history (cover story).

I hope that the History Center staff and Yarmouth residents of 50 or 100 years hence will be grateful for our efforts to document local life during the coronavirus pandemic: for our collection of locally made masks, photos of signs advertising things like curbside pickup or virtual church, a special "quarantine edition" Clam Festival tee shirt. Even emails from local organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and Merrill Memorial Library are going into our collection to illustrate the many ways Yarmouth people coped with the challenges imposed by COVID.

During our closure this past spring, I tried to look back about 100 years to the 1918 influenza pandemic to see how Yarmouth residents grappled with that world-changing event. Our archives were unexpectedly quiet on the topic. I had hoped to find an easy route to a collection of reminiscences or letters about the 1918 flu, but it was far from a straightforward task. I kept digging and, gradually, the first few puzzle pieces started to come together. The 1919 Report of the Board of Health, published in that year's Town Report, laid out the basics: first case reported on September 15, 1918, 250 cases reported through November 1, 12 deaths in that period. The report was written in February 1919, just after a second wave of infections had claimed five more lives.

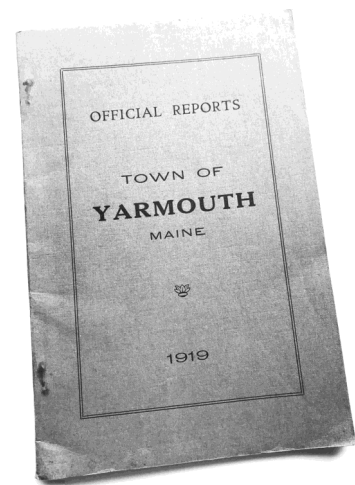
Names of flu victims provide more clues and ways to expand the story. Elsie Wellcome, for

whom our Wellcome Prize is named, died of influenza at the age of 25 in 1918. Despite her young age, she was a deeply involved community member, joining the Village Improvement Society and speaking out in support of women's suffrage. World War One draftees Edgar C. Anderson, age 26, and Edwin B. Mayberry, age 22, both perished within days of each other at Camp Devens, Massachusetts, where influenza struck catastrophically in September 1918. The American Legion Log Cabin on Main Street is named in their honor.



Above: Elsie Wellcome
Below: Yarmouth Town Report, 1919

More tidbits popped up as we worked through the summer. Anna, our sharp-eyed intern, spotted some clues in the records of First Baptist Church. In 1918, the Church recorded five successive Sunday closures, from late September through October, on account of influenza. Looking back on the past year from September 1919, the records noted the great difficulty of the year and the severity of the epidemic locally, while rejoicing that its members had survived.



As these pieces gradually come together with others gleaned from our collection in the future, we'll be able to tell a fuller story about Yarmouth's experience in 1918.

Continued on the next page



Above: Tribute to the Yarmouth High School class of 2020, a chalk rainbow on a neighborhood driveway, a painted heart rock along a local walking trail, and another opportunity to connect at the First Parish Church.

Creatively Connecting

One thing that will stand out in the artifacts and stories gathered during this time in Yarmouth's history is how the residents used their creativity to keep the community feeling connected.

During the early days of the quarantine, as schools, businesses, churches, and social and athletic organizations shut down, many were affected by the atmosphere of isolation and uncertainty. In Yarmouth that mood did not last long as many groups and individuals used the time to invent ways to connect with the community and bring cheer to the situation that was unfolding.

The quarantine period certainly showed the depth of this community's spirit through their efforts and enthusiasm for creating connections. One did not have to go far to find messages of inspiration and support. Through social media 'events' were organized and everyone was invited to take part in activities like the town-wide bear hunt to spot stuffed bears in windows and doorways and birthday car parades.

The students at Rowe and YES were encouraged to use the materials they had at home to create rainbows and display them in visible places for all to see. It did not take long for the students to cover the town in rainbows.

The antics of Skully and Boneita, Halloween skeletons on display on a lawn on East Main Street, entertained us all summer by showing us ways to have fun while social distancing. Inspirational images and messages in all shapes and sizes were plentiful. Some hung on homes, others were placed around town along sidewalks and roadways, and more 'greetings' could be found on painted rocks tucked into clever spots along the town's walking trails.

These simple gestures, lifting spirits by keeping the community connected, will be recorded as part of Yarmouth's history.

Collecting History *Continued*

As with so many other inquiries, this will be a long-term project as we work to identify and record references to the 1918 pandemic in letters, diaries, newspaper articles, and other areas of our collection.

Local history may seem like a fixed entity, static and unchanging as it accumulates in our archives, but that is far from the reality. We are actively documenting local history now, as worldwide events unfold and affect Yarmouth and its residents, organizations, and businesses. We're also looking back into the archives, rereading and examining with new intent, teasing out stories that had been forgotten, buried, or poorly preserved. Sometimes it takes a current event to help us delve into history with fresh eyes.

If you have any artifacts (such as photos, videos, small objects, or written observations) that you'd like to contribute to our COVID collection, please contact me:

kworthing@yarmouthmehistory.org.

Upcoming Events and Programs

All events this season will be presented online.

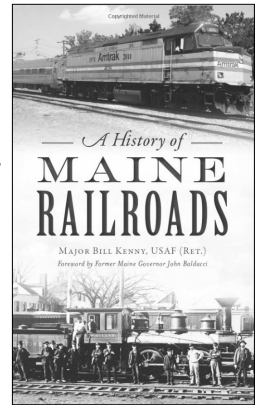
SEPTEMBER



Wednesday, September 30, 7pm, ONLINE

Book Talk: *A History of Maine Railroads* by Bill Kenny

Local author Bill Kenny joins us on Zoom to speak about his new book, *A History of Maine Railroads*, now available in our gift shop. Kenny, a former career U.S. Air Force officer and Gulf War veteran, developed a lifelong interest in trains from a very young age. His realization that Maine's history of railroads needs to be recorded, preserved and appreciated prompted the writing of this book, his first. Please email info@yarmouthmehistory.org to be added to the Zoom invite list.



OCTOBER



Tuesday, October 20, 6:45pm, ONLINE

Annual Meeting

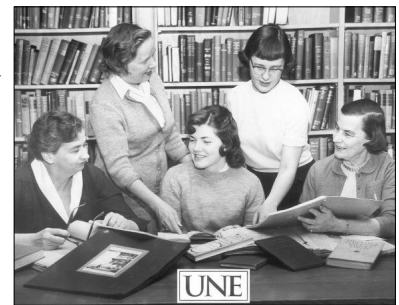
Yarmouth Historical Society's Annual Meeting is going virtual this year. Members, please join us on Zoom for a brief business meeting, which will be followed by a public talk. Please email info@yarmouthmehistory.org to be added to the Zoom invite list.



Tuesday, October 20, 7pm, ONLINE

Lecture: Maine Women Writers

Cathleen Miller, Education and Outreach Archivist at the University of New England's Maine Women Writers Collection, will share an overview of the organization's collection. The Maine Women Writers Collection was founded in 1959 by Grace Dow and Dorothy Healy to preserve and make available the writings of Maine women who had achieved literary recognition. Please email info@yarmouthmehistory.org to be added to the Zoom invite list.



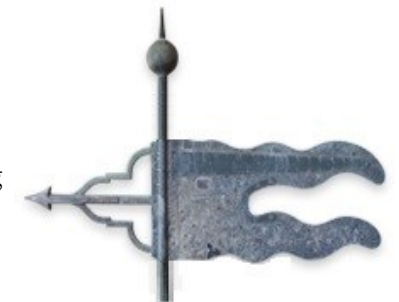
NOVEMBER



Tuesday, November 17, 7pm ONLINE

Winners of the Wellcome Prize

Please join us as we celebrate the winners of this year's Wellcome Prize for Student Historians. Awardees will share their prizewinning papers and films and speak about their discoveries via Zoom. Please email info@yarmouthmehistory.org to be added to the Zoom invite list.



The lecture series is sponsored by the
LEON AND LISA GORMAN FUND

Stroll Haunted Yarmouth

Maura Goessling

During the mandated state closure this spring the History Center found many ways to continue collecting and sharing Yarmouth's history. One unexpected method of collecting began with wandering the local cemeteries to 'dig up' (pun intended) characters for Royal River Community Players' upcoming production of Stroll Haunted Yarmouth. This production will mark the third year that Yarmouth Historical Society has collaborated with the Royal River Community Players and the Village Improvement Society to present Stroll Haunted Yarmouth (SHY). SHY is an original production that explores Yarmouth's past by using the real stories of people who lived and died here long ago.

The search for content begins in the cemeteries then continues on to the research phase, where historical archives are used to gather information about the life and times of each character. After the information is gathered there is an opportunity for some creative writing when the historical facts only reveal part of the story or what we imagine the story to be.

In past years the event has been outdoors and followed a route through the Baptist Cemetery on Hillside Road. The venue always added a bit of ambiance to the voices of Yarmouth's past. This year, in an effort to protect our audience, actors, and crew and stay within the state's mandated gathering orders, Stroll Haunted Yarmouth's production will be presented to ticket holders in an



Above: Stroll Haunted Yarmouth cast performing in the Baptist cemetery last October.

online format. Although we are disappointed that we will be unable to gather in and around the Meetinghouse we are excited by the possibilities of what we can present our viewers with filming the program. SHY's team explored many local venues and selected places that will bring authenticity and atmosphere to the stories. The format will certainly highlight these historical voices while showcasing places around Yarmouth.

Performances will air October 29, 30, and 31. Ticket information can be found at royalrivercommunityplayers.com. All proceeds from the event will go to support future productions of the Royal River Community Players.

Garden Update

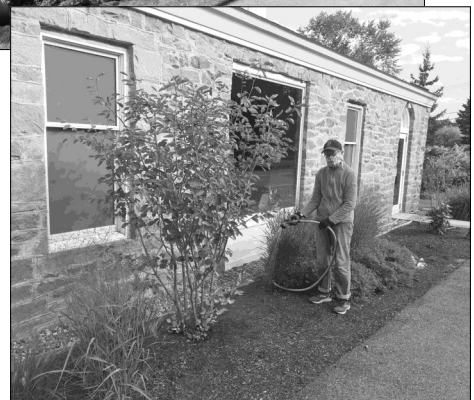
It has been a long, hot summer. Not the best conditions for our new plantings in the garden in front of the History Center. Fortunately for the Center our trustee Pam Adams and master gardener Susan Parrish Carter organized and scheduled a group of volunteers to maintain and water the garden.

The transformation of the space has been amazing to witness. The garden was designed to be a pollinators' garden filled with an assortment of perennials known to attract bees and butterflies. They did not disappoint as the garden was active all summer long. Now the goldfinches are feasting on the seeds produced by the Rudbeckia and Echinacea.

We appreciate all the time and work our volunteers put in this summer to keep the Center's garden beds thriving.

Top Right: The Yarmouth History Center garden volunteer group masked up and installing plants in early spring.

Lower Right: Pam Adams watering during the very dry summer.



Renew Your Membership Today!



Even with some distance between us . . .

We can still connect!



For the joy of gardening!

Estabrook's

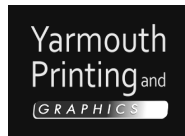
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