

Yarmouth History Center Newsletter

Spring 2021

118 East Elm Street, Yarmouth, Maine

207-846-6259

Elsie Wellcome

by Annie Sillin

North Yarmouth Academy senior and winner of the 2020 Wellcome Prize

Elsie May Wellcome, born on October 15th, 1893, grew up and spent her whole life in the town of Yarmouth. Her mother, Mrs. Mary Lindsey Wellcome, was born in Liverpool, England, and travelled to the United States when she was 12. She lived in Portland until she married in 1882, and she was “always deeply interested in civic and fraternal affairs,” participating in groups such as the Village Improvement Society, the Woman’s Club, and the Woman’s Alliance of the Central Universalist Church—groups that her daughter, Elsie, would also take an interest in during her lifetime (*Elsie Wellcome materials and photos, various collections*). Elsie’s father, Frank O. Wellcome, grew up in Yarmouth and took many jobs in the area before being appointed Yarmouth Postmaster. In addition to his services as Postmaster, he was passionate about music and was “active in musical circles,” later becoming “widely known as a musician.” He was even a member of a band called Chandler’s Band for a few years. Interestingly, Mr. Wellcome also invented a poultry appliance in 1900, which prompted the beginning of a mail order business that he ran out of Yarmouth. In 1882, Frank and Mary Lindsey married, and they had two children—Frank L. Wellcome and Elsie M. Wellcome.

Born the daughter of the Yarmouth Postmaster, Elsie worked alongside her father as his assistant for many years and grew up learning the trade of postal work. She grew up influenced by his work, and, when she was old enough, became his assistant, as she had “been engaged in postal work for some time” (*Elsie Wellcome materials and photos, various collections*). She held the position of assistant postmaster for four years, and later became a “valued correspondent for several newspapers.” However, these positions later gave way to other priorities for Elsie.

Elsie received her education at Yarmouth High School and was an exceptional student—she graduated on the “class roll” and was one of many speakers at her graduation in 1912. Other students delivered speeches that covered topics such as “Canadian Life in Winter,” “Use of Clover in Agriculture,” and “Why Go to College?” The speech Elsie gave, deemed the “Class Essay,” was entitled “The Woman of Tomorrow” and discussed the changing nature of the woman’s place in social

spheres. This was a hotly debated subject at the time and would prove to become a large part of Elsie’s life later on.

After graduating high school, Elsie became part of many foundations that helped her community, one of the most prominent being the Khaki Knitting Klub. Unfortunately nicknamed the “K.K.K.,” the Khaki Knitting Klub was a meeting of Yarmouth women who knit socks,

gloves, and other articles of clothing for soldiers who were sent to fight in World War I. After the club’s founder got drafted into the war, the group began publishing a weekly newsletter, which was filled with “words of good cheer, together with a bit of gossip and foolishness.” (*Khaki Knitting Klub newsletters, 1918*). These newsletters were written in a light tone and discussed mainly town gossip, various stories, and lighthearted tales of foolish happenings in the club. While the club did provide a huge service to soldiers out fighting in World War I, its newsletters served mainly as a humorous relief from other tense issues.

Another way Elsie spent her time serving her community was as a part of the Yarmouth Village Improvement Society. This organization sponsored events like “Clean Up Week,” during which young women (most of whom were a part of the society) helped in cleaning and organizational initiatives around town. One such program was the cleaning of the library steps right on Main Street in Yarmouth, a picture of which captures Elsie in 1916 alongside fellow members of the Village Improvement Society. The group served the town through such projects and was an important part of the lives of many women who wanted to be a part of town life but were not yet allowed to vote or participate in other such civic activities.



Above: Elsie Wellcome’s 1912 High School graduation portrait.

Continued on Page 6

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chair

Chuck Murray

Vice-Chair

Jessie McGrath

Treasurer

Eric Leinwand

Secretary

Ben Soule

Pamelia Adams

Art Bell

Julie Benavides

Binks Colby-George

Tamson Bickford Hamrock

Caroline Knott

Betsy Langer

Ed Libby

William Nugent

David Ray

Peter Sillin

Sarah Wallace

Executive Director

Katherine G. Worthing

Yarmouth Historical Society
118 East Elm Street
P.O. Box 107
Yarmouth, ME 04096
207-846-6259
yarmouthmehistory.org

Published quarterly for
Yarmouth Historical Society
members.

From the Chair

As we wrap up our Annual Fund campaign, please accept my thanks for your continued support of the Yarmouth Historical Society. In a year full of challenges not experienced in recent memory, Annual Fund pledges are on budget and surprisingly on par with 2019. The Annual Fund is a great indicator that our staff, volunteers, and trustees are staying focused on the mission to collect and preserve the history of Yarmouth, and to educate the public about our community's proud past.



The current History Center hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10:00am to 4:00pm, and although traffic has decreased due to the pandemic, we are happy to welcome all visitors to the gallery, museum, or shop. We kindly request that all visitors wear a mask and follow the recommended guidelines for gathering.

Also, please keep in mind that our website (www.yarmouthmehistory.org), contains recorded lectures, videos, stories, recorded walking tours, announcements, and other ways to participate in the mission. As an organization we take great pride in the wonderful work that Katie Worthing and our staff are doing at the Center and online.

Thanks again for your overwhelming support.

Warm regards,

Chuck Murray

Upcoming Events and Programs

MARCH 2021

Tuesday, March 16, 4:00 pm via Zoom FREE

Lecture: Petticoat Whalers: Women on American Whaleships

Presented by historian Curt Martin

Please email info@yarmouthmehistory.org to be added to the invite list

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

March 9 through April 30

Exhibit: Art Quilts Maine

Stonewall Gallery presents the 2020 Art Quilt Challenges: Tessellations and a New Twist to an Old Master

Thank You to Our Annual Fund Donors

Gifts from 14 February 2020 to 5 February 2021

Beverle Aceto
Pamela Adams & Family
Ed & Rayle Ainsworth
Nancy Allyn
Sherry Anderson
John & Sharon Andrews
David & Cynthia Asherman
Karen Asherman
Jane Gagne & Roger Beaulieu
Craig Schneider & Kyo Bannai
Charles & Mary Belisle
Robin Hodgskin
& Art Bell
Julie Benavides
Marilyn Bickford
Robert & Barbara Billings
Judith Bishop
◆ In memory of Robert Bishop
Sarah Downs & James Bowie
Sandra Bowie
Susan Campbell
Phoebe Chandler
Dean & Susan Cilley
Peter & Gail Cinelli
Gail & Gordy Clark
Craig & Kristin Coleman
Madeleine Corson
James & Anne Cram
Seb D'Appolonia
Sarah & Avery Day
Sue Dealaman
Chelsea & Noah DeLorme
Jennifer Devore
Linda Donahue
Don & Abby Douglas
Tom Downing
& Margaret Ryan Downing
Margot Downs
◆ In honor of the collaboration with Royal
River Community Players for the produc-
tion of Stroll Haunted Yarmouth
Gunilla Qvarfordt
& Martin Eisenstein
Charles C. Emmons
& Margaret Emmons
Paul & Mary Lynn Engel
Bruce Roberts & Susan Feiner
Irving & Donna Felker
Linda Ferreira
Tom & Sarah Flanagan
Kent Wommack
& Gro Flatebo
Lynne Manson Gawtry
& Michael Gawtry
Maura & Stephen Goessling
James & Maureen Gorman
Lisa Gorman
Linda & Schuyler Grant
Richard & Janice Greene
Bill & Nancy Gregory
Janet Lohmann & Michael Griffin

Bette Grondin
Don and Dot Grosset
Joan Russell & Gardiner Hall
Mary Halsey
Kendall & Deanna Harnett
The Philip & Christie Harriman
Family Charitable Trust
Frank Harrison
Ellen Alderman & William Harwood
Peter L. Haynes
Judith Heap
Prudence Heard
Erik Hellstedt & Megan Shane Hellstedt
Jim & Mary Highland
John Hodgkins
Fred & Pam Hoffman
Holly Holbrook
Elizabeth Hope
Charles & Linda Horstmann
Horace & Barbara Horton
Richard & Jennifer Hubbell
Stephen & Sally Hunt
Alice Ingraham
The Jackson Family
Patrick & Christina Jackson
J. Spencer & Emily Jones
Bud & Wendy Kellett
Lorrie King
Caroline & Robert Knott Jr.
Tina & Jerry Kuhn
Betsy Lane
Andre & Mary LeMaistre
◆ for the Margaret W. Soule Archive
Paul Lattanzi & Annmarie Reich Lattanzi
Dale & Rich Lewis
Amy Panagakos & Ed Libby
Scott Logan & Carrie McGilvery Logan
Amanda Lott
Chris & Carson Lutes
Rosemary MacKay
William Macleod
Elizabeth & Mark Marin
Josh & Becky Marvil
Dash & Geoff Masland
Dorothy McAloney
Marian L. McCue
William McCue
Jessica & Kevin McGrath
Sandra Wachholz & Dick McWilliams
Linc & Kim Merrill
Justin Whitlock & Stephanie Meyer
Stephen & Elizabeth Milley
Kent & Ann Mohnkern
Tracy Burton & Kenneth Moller
Heidi & Michael Morrill
Catherine Morrow
Xoa & James Moshier
Kenneth Murphy
Chuck & Lisa Murray
Ann & Ted Noyes
Bill & Rita Nugent

Martha O'Brien
John & Denise Palmer
Esther Pappas
Stephen & Jane Parker
Barbara & Rick Parkhurst
Sharon McDonnell
& Gib Parrish
David & Amy Pearl
Patricia Merrill
& Richard Piotrowicz
Charlie & Liz Poole
Pat Rabidoux
David Ray & Kay Loftus Ray
William Reagan & Sharon Pray
Jodee Ristich
Rebecca Rundquist with the
Frank Knight Foundation
John & Karen Saucier
Ray & Janis Sawyer
Ellen Schulten
Bill & Arlene Schwind
Curt & Nina Scribner
Peter Lee & Lynne Seeley
David Selleck
Nick & Joan Semenuk
Jean Semonite
Ted & Sharon Sharp
Karl & Elizabeth Sladek
Mark & Kimberly Snow
Jeff & Dominique Sommer
Ben Soule
& Betsy McElvein Soule
Arthur & Martha Spiess
Bud & Susan Stiker
Krista Jones & Craig Stinson
Mary & Paul Stuart
Claire & Robert Studley
Robert & Jean Swan
Matt & Tracy Teare
Ann Thayer
Peter & Rebecca Thompson
Mariana & Benjamin Tupper
Amy Sinclair & Tux Turkel
Jim Van Fleet
& Sarah Swann Van Fleet
Val & Henry Vaughan
Guy & Eleanor Vigue
Charles & Caroline Vining
Cindy and Joe Walden
Monte & Anne Wallace
Sarah J. Wallace
Sally & Gabe Weiss
Susanne Wheat
Judith White
Bob & Pam Whitehead
Tim Williams
Dick & Debbie Woodbury
Sam Heck & Katie Worthing

In and Around the History Center

Archiving The NOTES

In January as The NOTES closed its doors we opened ours to accept their donation of the paper's collection of past issues. It is a large collection full of images and stories that capture Yarmouth's recent history.

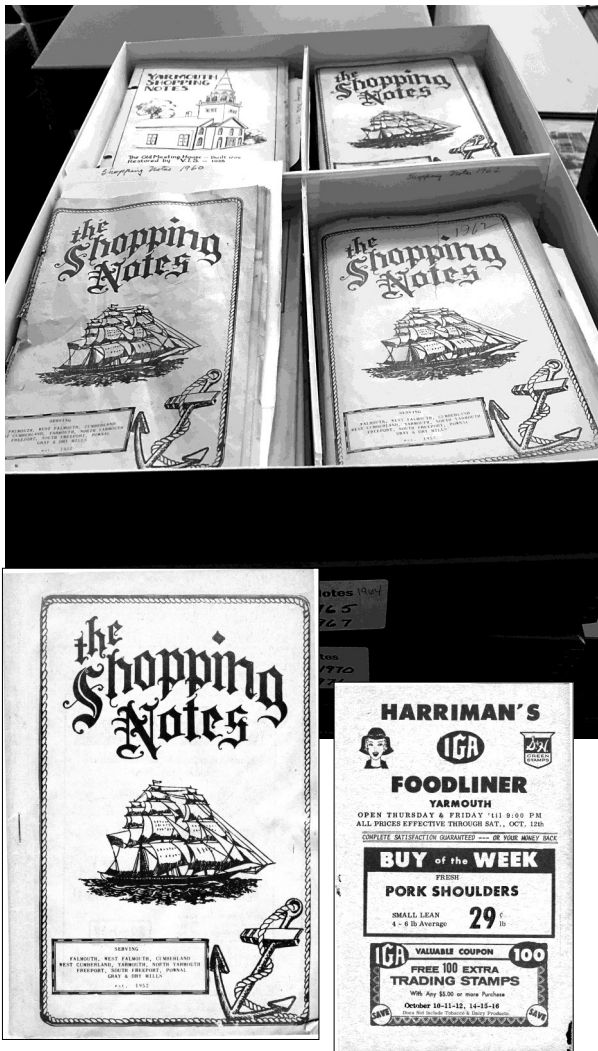
For decades, area residents have relied on The NOTES as their connection to local businesses, area classifieds, and community events. The NOTES, a family owned and operated business, began and remained a free weekly news magazine for the 68 years it was published. Created by Ken Larrabee in 1952, The Shopping Notes began as an advertising flyer to promote Larrabee's after-Christmas sale for his Yarmouth Dollar Store.

The first issue of the Shopping Notes was a single-spaced, typewritten flyer with hand-lettered titles. It was printed on a mimeograph machine in the basement of the store. The paper's popularity grew and when it was sold in 1978 to Stan and Nancy Milton it was an established publication. The Miltons continued to build the business and expanded the paper from 12 pages of local news, advertising, and a column by Ken Larrabee to 24 pages.

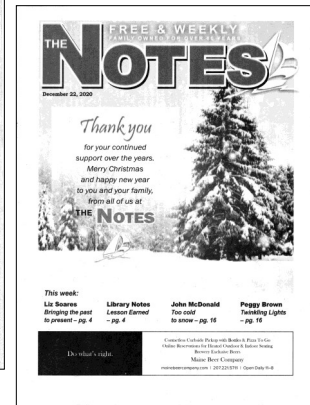
In a special 30th year issue dated October 6, 1982, the Shopping Notes appeared with a redesigned logo minimizing the word 'shopping' and prominently displaying 'The NOTES', which the paper would eventually be called by its readers.

Brothers Mark and Andrew LaBrie took the helm of the paper in 2002 and expanded The NOTES adding to its distribution, creating an online version, and adding full color photographs and advertisements as they carried on their family's tradition of serving Yarmouth and the surrounding communities.

Continued on the next page



Top: Collection of past issues of The Shopping Notes.
Above Left: 1963 cover of The Shopping Notes.
Above Right: 1963 Harriman's IGA advertisement.



Above: The NOTES June 1989 cover featuring graduate Joanne LaCroix and her mother Ginny. **Right:** The cover of the last issue of The NOTES 2020. **Below:** Nancy Freeman's 2nd grade class trip to Yarmouth Historical Society in the 1970s.



In and Around the History Center

Continued from Page 4

In 1952 the Shopping Notes flyers were mailed to five hundred Yarmouth residents. By 2020 the paper's distribution ranged from Portland north to Brunswick and was easily found in any doctor office, dentist office, regional bank, Hannaford store, Shaw's Supermarket, coffee shop, the town library. . . so many locations. . . so many connections.

The popularity of The NOTES has been the same since its beginnings. The late Stan Milton, who acquired the paper in 1978, summed it up best, "The paper's popularity derives from its local angle. People say they adore the paper because everything they want to know is in it."

Mark and Andrew LaBrie, The NOTES current owners and publishers, made sure the paper would not be forgotten. To secure the paper's place in Yarmouth's history they delivered The NOTES' collection of past issues and photographs to the Yarmouth History Center to become a part of the archives. Thank you, LaBrie family, for being such an important part of our community and helping preserve its history.



Above: Clam Festival Photographs from The NOTES archive. Crowds waiting for the Parade.

Remembering Gordon Corbett

Sorting through the photos in The NOTES archive we came across photos of the late Gordon Corbett, former Yarmouth teacher and friend of the Historical Society. This past December we received the sad news of his passing. In October of 2018 Gordon helped the Society recreate a photo of the old water district that captured his father-in-law's 1971 Chevy pickup truck in the parking lot. Gordon, keeper of the family heirloom, kindly brought the truck to the History Center so we could photograph it with the new building in the background. It set up a wonderful 'then' and 'now' photograph for our archives.

Gordon was a favorite Yarmouth teacher of many students throughout his long career teaching middle school. His creativity as an educator earned him

many accolades: Teacher of the Year for Yarmouth in 1979, followed by Teacher of the Year for the state of Maine in 1980. He was one of Maine's candidates for NASA's Teacher in Space Program in 1985. Gordon was also awarded the Frank K. Brewer Aerospace Award in 1988 as well as the Outstanding Alumnus from the University of Maine at Machias in 1994.



Above: Yarmouth 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students celebrate Arbor Day with Mr. Corbett. A photograph from THE NOTES archive.

Remembrance

This past year has been a somber one for us as we received news of the passing of friends, former trustees, and volunteers. In January at the Historical Society Board of Trustees meeting there was a moment of silence to remember those near and far who are no longer with us.

Elsie Wellcome

Continued from Page 1

Elsie served the town of Yarmouth not only through her participation in organizations such as the Village Improvement Society and the Khaki Knitting Klub, but also through her spirited debates concerning suffrage, most often and more notably against a local woman named Harriet Bird. Mrs. Bird, an active member of the Village Improvement Society and president of the Maine Association Opposed to Suffrage for Women for some time, was vocally anti-suffrage for women, and she would often engage in public debates with Elsie on the topic.

Mrs. Bird's anti-suffrage argument tied into much larger social themes. She based such beliefs on "biological, physiological, and psychological" reasons, namely that women had physical disabilities that made them "too impatient and excitable" to be trusted to participate in politics (*Bird, Harriet. Scrapbook. Box 1. Collection 191 Harriet Bird Collection*). She also frequently referenced the dangers of feminism, worrying that it would lead to socialism and eventually anarchism: "Suffrage leads to feminism and feminism destroys the home," she put in one debate. Worried about the possibility of social upheaval and anarchism, Bird made it clear that, in order to maintain stability, women must remain where they always have—in the home, having nothing to do with politics.

While Mrs. Bird upheld the concept of the "woman's sphere," discussing how the place of the woman was strictly in the home, Elsie often took a more progressive stance. She accounted for how the lives of women changed as a result of industrialization, namely that the period "revolutionized the status of homebuilders and homekeepers" (*Elsie Wellcome materials and photos, various collections*). When confronted with the concern that women were spending too much time in politics and not enough in the home, she expressed that, "to serve the home women must go outside the house to have a voice in governing so many issues that affect children." In response to the claim that women were intruding on the responsibilities of politically active men and the worry that there would be no one left to take care of the home once women secured the right to vote, Elsie reassured listeners (and later readers): "Women are not rushing into man's



Above: Elsie Wellcome and friend Anna Stockwell.

work... the home will still be the center of women's interest." While her views on such issues were certainly seen as progressive during the time, Elsie still held the belief that was common and expected of all during that time (especially women): no matter what liberties she had, the woman's primary place was still in the home. This was the main belief that she and Mrs. Bird shared despite their frequent debates.

As is evident from Elsie and Mrs. Bird's debates, women who lived during this time were confronted with various changes to social life, particularly the evolution of their role within both families and larger town life. One such change was a surge in a "trend of physical activities for women which defined their leisure time outside the home" (*Elsie Wellcome materials and photos, various collections*). This began as a rise in doctors telling women to go bike riding as a benefit to their health, and it soon became quite a popular activity. This activity provided women with a new way to enjoy themselves outside of the domestic sphere, an idea which was just starting to take hold during this time. Also, because of a rise in groups such as the Village Improvement Society and the Khaki Knitting Klub, women had increasingly many opportunities to participate in activities that served their town—no longer just their husbands and families. Overall, this time period saw a powerful and previously unheard-of rise in female participation in activities outside of the home, including leisure activities, town clean-up initiatives, contributions to the war effort, and involvement in local politics.

Continued on the next page

Elsie Wellcome

Continued from Page 6

Elsie, after all she accomplished in an incredibly short time, died at the tragically young age of 25 after becoming infected with the Spanish flu during the famous 1918 pandemic. She passed away on December 22, 1918, in the home of her parents, and is now buried in Riverside Cemetery in Yarmouth. The influenza pandemic, which infected more than 500 million people worldwide and killed at least 50 million people across the globe, spread to Yarmouth in the fall of 1918, with the first case in the town reported on September 15, 1918 (*Elsie Wellcome materials and photos, various collections*). A Yarmouth Report of the Board of Health from February 1919 states that “isolation of the patient, quarantine of the family, and the interruption of all unnecessary public gatherings” were the most effective measures put in place to slow the spread of the virus, much like the measures taken today to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The life of Elsie May Wellcome is relevant today not only in the context of her virus-related death, which is morbidly relatable today in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also because of the social and political work she did for the town of Yarmouth. Her contributions to the Village Improvement Society, her presidential role in the Khaki Knitting Klub, and her debates with Harriet Bird helped improve the town of Yarmouth and advance life into a more progressive sphere, especially for women. With all she did in her short life, there is no doubt that she



Above : Elsie Wellcome lending a helping hand.

made the town of Yarmouth a better place and, more than 100 years later, her contributions remain an inspiration to all, especially young women, as an example of what can be achieved through hard work and a desire to serve one’s community.

Works Cited

Bird, Harriet. Scrapbook. Box 1. Collection 191 Harriet Bird Collection. Yarmouth Historical Society, Yarmouth, ME. 17 July 2020.

Elsie Wellcome materials and photos. Various collections. Yarmouth Historical Society, Yarmouth, ME. 17 July 2020.

Khaki Knitting Klub. Newsletters, 1918. Small collection 232 Khaki Knitting Klub. Yarmouth Historical Society, Yarmouth, ME. 17 July 2020.

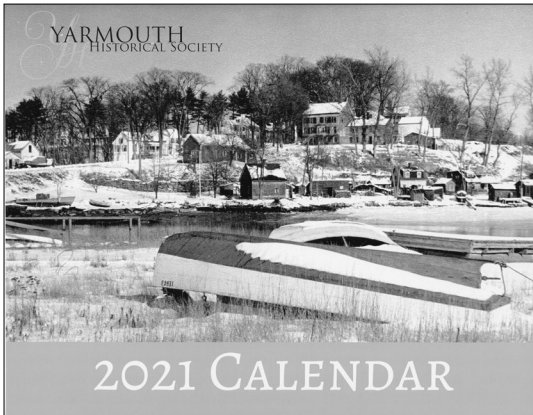
The Wellcome Prize for Student Historians

Annie Sillin, winner of Yarmouth Historical Society’s 2020 Wellcome Prize for Student Historians, is a senior at North Yarmouth Academy and a resident of Yarmouth. Her paper about the life and times of Elsie Wellcome, the woman for whom the prize is named, was awarded first prize and was presented (via Zoom) in November as part of the History Center’s lecture series sponsored by the Leon and Lisa Gorman Fund.

The Wellcome Prize for Student Historians is Yarmouth History Center’s history competition open to high school students in Maine. Students are invited to undertake original historical research about a local history topic related to Cumberland County and write a research paper or create an original film about their findings. Entries are judged on the quality of presentation and research and winners are invited to present their findings to the public as part of the History Center’s fall lecture series. See our website for more details about the 2021 Wellcome Prize competition and award.



Above: 2020 Wellcome Prize winner Annie Sillin.



Available at the
History Center Gift Shop
Or
Order Online
www.yarmouthmehistory.org
Hours: Tuesday through Friday 10 to 4



Image assistance and printing by Yarmouth Printing and Graphics

Non-Profit
Postage PAID
Permit No. 46
Yarmouth, ME

Yarmouth, Maine 04096-0107
P. O. Box 107
YARMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

