

# Yarmouth History Center Newsletter

Spring 2022

118 East Elm Street, Yarmouth, Maine

207-846-6259

## The Next Best Thing to Time Travel Past Issues of *The Shopping Notes* Now Online

Katie Worthing, Executive Director

Some decisions in my job are really easy ones. So, when Mark LaBrie, whose family has been the driving force behind *The Notes* for decades, called to let me know that they had made the hard decision to cease publishing the beloved local newspaper and ask whether their collection of back issues would be useful for our collection, I didn't hesitate for a second to reply with an enthusiastic YES. Of course we would take a collection of newspapers containing the most local stories, events, advertisements, and photographs going back to the 1950s. What historical society wouldn't jump at this opportunity?

And then Mark mentioned that it was a pretty sizable collection. I didn't waver in my decision, but he certainly wasn't exaggerating. All in, we received sixty archival boxes, carefully labeled and packed with past issues. I added a couple more boxes myself after visiting the office of *The Notes* and collecting dozens of the earliest editions and stacks of photographs. It is a big collection, perhaps the largest archival collection we have ever received.

The heavy boxes quickly filled a corner of the Center's Hamill Room. Within each one was a treasure trove of newspapers offering details about the town of Yarmouth from 1953 to 2010. As a weekly newspaper, *The Notes* is an extensive record of local news and business advertisements, many of the early ones hand-drawn and -lettered, that preserve and relate the day-to-day circumstances of life in Yarmouth and neighboring towns.

It was clear to me that such a large collection of ephemeral material would require special handling and consideration. Since newsprint can get quite



Above: Katie Worthing sorting issues of *The Shopping Notes* collection.

brittle and yellowed with age, I knew that we would want to be judicious in handling the collection to ensure its preservation. But then, how could we justify housing a huge collection rich with information that was so hard to access? The answer was clear from the beginning: this incredible time-capsule collection would be our first foray into digitization.

A digital archive enables us to share *The Notes* with the widest possible audience and opens up easy

access for research questions, searches, or even just browsing. After researching different digitization options, we decided to work with Advantage Preservation of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Their Community History Archive already includes dozens of Maine newspapers from towns across the state, enabling our new digital archive to fit right into this existing statewide network.

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### A SHORT HISTORY OF THE NOTES:

Area residents relied on *The Shopping 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 paper for the 68 years it was published.

Its popularity never declined. The late Stan Milton, who acquired the paper in 1978 from Ken Larrabee, 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."

Find *The Notes* online at [yarmouthmehistory.org/the-notes/](http://yarmouthmehistory.org/the-notes/)

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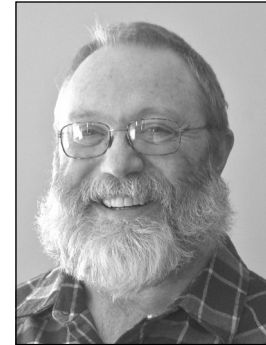
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# From the Chair

Hello Members and thank you all for your support of the Yarmouth Historical Society!

My name is Binks Colby-George and I am the new Board of Trustees Chair. I grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, with two history teacher parents. We spent our summers travelling the country checking out ghost towns, mining sites and battlefields. I have been living in Yarmouth for the past 25 years with my wife Judy and our two children, Noah and Gabby.



I like seeing the connections between the past and present. As the continuing pandemic has brought home, we are living history right now that future generations will need to put in context. What were ZOOM calls? Did masks work? Vaccination cards? Booster shots? Why were teddy bears placed in windows? Our Historical Society records the issues Yarmouth faces in the present as well as preserving the past.

February is the beginning of our yearly membership campaign so please consider renewing. Membership keeps us connected! As a member you will be kept up-to-date on all that is going on at the History Center. You can also visit our website to find more information about the upcoming speakers for the spring lecture series, links to the new digital content available online (see feature story), and learn about our featured artist in the Stonewall Gallery. Stay tuned, there is so much more to come!

Thanks again for your membership and support. I look forward to meeting with you in the months to come.

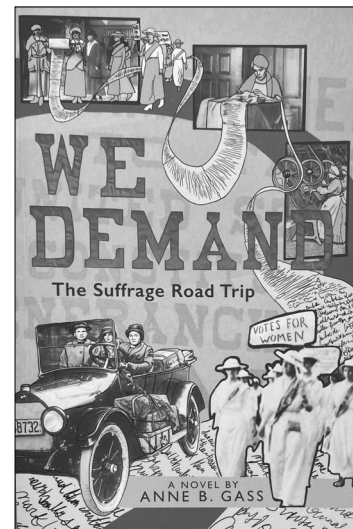
**Binks Colby-George**  
Chair, Board of Trustees

## Spring Lecture Series Begins

Author Anne B. Gass will speak about her new novel, *We Demand, The Suffrage Road Trip*, a story that recounts the journey of four women who travel in an open car from San Francisco to Washington, DC, to deliver a petition to Congress and President Wilson demanding an amendment to the US Constitution enfranchising women.

It promises to be a lively, illustrated talk. The novel is available at the Yarmouth History Center gift shop for those who would like to read it before the talk.

The presentation will take place on Tuesday, March 22nd at 7pm. Location TBD. Check the Center's website for location update.



Above: The book cover of Gass' current novel.

# Harriet Bird: Examining a Female Anti-Suffragist

By Ava Jutras, Yarmouth High School Class of 2023  
2021 Wellcome Prize Essay Contest Winner

Why did some women in the late 19th century debate so passionately against their own right to vote? This is a question I had not considered before diving into my research about the many notable women of Yarmouth. I had always thought that the Women's Suffrage Movement consisted of women fighting united to try to break free of men holding them down and refusing to give them the right to participate in our country's democracy. While there were many brave women who did fight to change the law, and who I can thank for my right to vote as a woman today, a person's political ideas do not depend on their gender, class, or race. Not every woman was united against every man in this issue. Everyone thinks differently and Suffrage is just one example of the many ways history is more complicated than it appears at first glance. I stumbled upon someone that changed my perspective on Women's Suffrage and history forever, and I want to share her story with you.

Mrs. Harriet Bird is one of the most interesting and thought-provoking women in Yarmouth history. She was born Hattie Williams in Yarmouth in 1864, and lived in the home her father built, and is still standing today at 73 West Elm St (See image 2) (2). Harriet graduated from Yarmouth High School in 1881, where she was very involved, and even read the class poem at her graduation. She went on to attend Wellesley College where she earned a bachelor's of science degree; she graduated in 1885. Her plans after college were highlighted in the "Wellesley College Class of 1885 Statistics for '88-89" (1) where she describes her hopes of becoming a teacher in Portland. Harriet accomplished this before settling down in Yarmouth with her husband, and transforming into Mrs. George Bird. Once married, she did not continue teaching. Instead she became deeply involved in many community organizations and clubs in Yarmouth. Harriet had the idea that she wanted a way for people to get involved and to help make their town a better and more beautiful place, so she founded the Yarmouth Village Improvement Society in 1911, and served its president for 21 years (3). She was an active member of the Women's Club in Yarmouth and is one of the only Maine women ever honored by becoming a member of the Civic As-



Above: Portrait of Harriet Bird

sociation of Washington for her community service efforts (1).

Harriet Bird, an intelligent, well-educated and deeply involved community member, was also one of the most outspoken leaders against the effort to include women in the right to vote. She spoke many times at the Men's and Women's Clubs in Yarmouth, was the President of the Maine Anti-Suffrage Association where she organized and attended many protests (see image 3), and attended and spoke at many out of state conventions and meetings about Anti-Suffrage as a representative from Maine (1). She was very well known within the Anti-Suffrage community of New England, and was notorious for her detailed speeches regarding why women should not have the right to vote. One of the main points in her rhetoric was the differences in male and female psychology and biology. She explains her

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## Harriet Bird

*Continued from page 3*

thoughts in 1914, stating that female suffragists were women, “rebellious against nature,” and that, “God created men and women with varying functions, obligations, and duties” (1). Here she explained her belief that men and women are given their varying jobs in society, and for there to be a functioning society, people need to stick to their roles. Another example of this is when, in this same speech, she stated that, “The happiness of the home and cost of living are women's duties, they should stick to them and not bother with politics” (1). Harriet was happy with her life and the role that society had put her in as a woman. She married a Maine Supreme Court Justice, and lived in a beautiful house on West Elm Street. Harriet was seen as a pillar in the Yarmouth community, and in her obituary, the first words used to describe her were, “widely acquainted”(3). She did not feel at all constrained by her lack of voting rights. She even went as far as to say, “Good housekeeping is even more difficult than political life”(1). She did not want anything to change. She had flourished in a traditional woman's role, and did not understand why others would want to break “out of the box”.

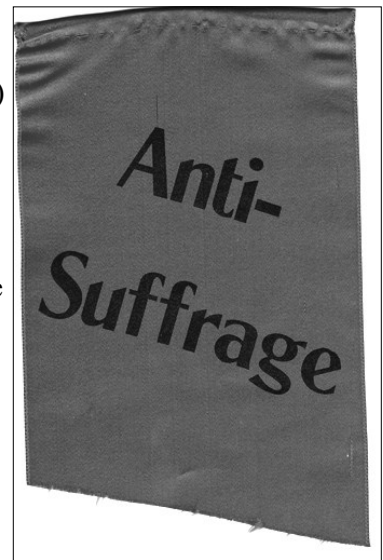
During this time period, women were battling for their rights. As roughly half the population, why wouldn't women have wanted the right to vote? They were making up an ever-growing percent of the workforce. They took care of their homes; they gave birth to and raised the next generation. They were forming their own opinions, and becoming increasingly politically active. Harriet shared her own political opinions - advocating for better health, food, morals and education of children, abolishing child labor, establishing juvenile courts, safer working conditions for women, and less legal discrimination against women. She had strong opinions, so why wouldn't she want to voice them in the form of casting a vote? Harriet Bird is an enigma full of contradictions who fascinated me the more I learned about her.

Something notable I learned about Harriet's life is that she wasn't fighting against Suffrage when the movement was just sprouting; she was giving speeches and attending conferences from 1914 to 1916 (1). The first state to grant Suffrage was Wyoming in 1869, when Harriet was 5 years old. Colorado followed in 1893, with Idaho, and Utah not far behind, granting women's suffrage in 1896 (5). By the time Harriet became active in the world of Anti-Suffrage in 1914, eight more



Above: Harriet Bird's home from 1864-1919 located at 73 West Elm Street, Yarmouth.

states (all in the western half of the United States) had granted Women's Suffrage. She started making speeches and attending protests when she saw the traditional world she thrived in changing with the women's right to vote. She viewed the west through a critical gaze; she saw them as lawless and less civilized. When speaking of these western women who had a right to vote as of 1914, she declared them as, “being obsessed with their own importance and overrating their part in the good that has been accomplished” (1).



Above: Harriet Bird's red badge from an Anti-Suffrage protest.

A difference of opinion on Suffrage existed generationally between women in the United States. While conducting research for this essay, I had the privilege of reading Annie Sillin's winning essay for the 2020 Wellcome Prize. She detailed the life of the woman for which this prize was named - Elsie Wellcome. Elsie Wellcome was Harriet's pro-suffrage counterpart. They debated frequently regarding Women's Rights and were both seen as leaders in the community (4). In her essay, Annie sums up Harriet Bird's thinking by stating, “Worried about the possibility of social

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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” (4).

Despite their differences of opinion, discourse between Wellcome and Bird was civil, respectful. As a matter of fact, their debates frequently ended with cake and lemonade! This is far from the heated political debates which have become commonplace in today’s world. Both women were similarly passionate about helping the community. This was exemplified by their mutual involvement in the Village Improvement Society (1).

In closing, I wanted to highlight the significant age difference between these two women. Elsie was born in 1893 and graduated from high school in 1912 (4). With 31 years between them, they essentially grew up in completely different political environments. I believe that these differing environments are responsible, in part, for the differences in their views. When Harriet was in high school, the states that had granted Women's Suffrage were few and far between, but 30 years later (when Elsie was graduating from the same high school) Suffrage was gaining more traction, with ideas of women breaking out of their roles following closely behind (5). Another way to think about this is that the 1950s and the 1980s are only 30 years apart. Think of the advancements made during that time period, not just in feminism but in every aspect of society. Ideas about women's roles shifted; medicine and technology advanced tremendously. A lot can change in 30 years - Elsie Wellcome and Harriet Bird are proof enough of that. Their relationship did not consist of two women of the same era debating over women's right to cast a ballot. It was a middle aged woman who stood for tradition, defending the past, debating a bright, young feminist who was fighting for the future.

It is easy to judge Harriet Bird through a modern lens, thinking of her as unintelligent, and backward for her beliefs. While I do not agree with

many of her opinions, I am grateful (despite her efforts) that national Suffrage was granted in 1920 (5). Bird was a smart, determined woman who cared enough about her community to fight for what she believed was right. She thought that women getting to vote was the first step towards greater freedoms for women, and therefore great societal change (she was right). This scared her. She thought the world functioned perfectly well as it was, and didn't see a need to change it. Throughout Harriet’s life, things had changed drastically, and rapidly. Harriet Bird’s story is complex because, through arguing against women's suffrage, she became a female political leader herself. Through the stories of individuals like Harriet Bird, we see that history is complicated, and no issue is ever as black and white as it first seems. I feel fortunate that I got a chance to learn more about this significant woman's life, even though her views regarding suffrage couldn't be any more different than my own. Learning about Harriet Bird taught me so much about a moment in history I hadn't yet considered: women opposing the right to vote.

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1. Bird, Harriet. Scrapbook. Box 1. Collection 191 Harriet Bird Collection. Yarmouth Historical Society, Yarmouth, ME. 10 September 2021.
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3. Local History Files, George and Harriet Bird, Yarmouth Historical Society, Yarmouth, ME. 10 September 2021.
4. “Elsie Wellcome” by Annie Sillin. Wellcome Prize Winning Essay 2020. Yarmouth Historical Society, Yarmouth, ME. 10 September 2021.
5. 100 Years of the Women's Vote: Suffrage Map. (2021). By Jenn Brandt. Retrieved 23 September 2021, from <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/100-years-of-the-womens-vote/media/suffrage-map>

### **About the Author**

Ava Jutras is Yarmouth History Center’s 2021 Wellcome Prize Essay Contest winner. She is currently a junior at Yarmouth High School, and her favorite subject in school is history. She rows on the Maine Coast Rowing Association crew team in spring and fall. In her spare time, Ava enjoys sewing, spending time with her friends, being outside, and listening to music. She is glad to have learned more about her community and women's voting rights through her research and writing.

# Wellcome Prize Winners

## Film Contest Winner

Maddy Corson, Yarmouth History Center's 2021 Wellcome Prize Film Contest winner, is a senior at Yarmouth High School. She was awarded 1st place for her investigative film *Four Falls: A Brief History & Environmental Inquiry*. Maddy is a senior at Yarmouth High School. There, she is involved with student government, is a co-captain for the school's Speech & Debate Team, and is also president of both the Interact (Youth Rotary) and Women's Health Clubs.

During her time as an intern for the Yarmouth Historical Society this past summer, Maddy researched the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in the lives of two historical Yarmouth residents. Her research can be found on the Center's website published in the Fall 2021 Yarmouth History Center Newsletter. Outside of school, extracurriculars, and work, Maddy enjoys painting, volunteerism, and social justice advocacy. Following her undergraduate education, Maddy hopes to earn her juris doctor degree to serve as an attorney, and later, as a public official. Maddy's film, *Four Falls: A Brief History & Environmental Inquiry*, can be accessed from our home page, [yarmouthmehistory.org](http://yarmouthmehistory.org).



Above: The Forest Paper Company circa 1910.

## Essay Contest Winners

Here are the winners of this year's Wellcome Prize Essay Contest. Ava Jutras was the first prize winner for her paper analyzing the life and times of local anti-suffragist Harriet Bird (*see page 3*). Leyi Li, an NYA student, earned second prize for her paper about the assimilation and rejuvenation of the Franco-American Community in Maine. Nathaniel Peretz, a senior from NYA, received third prize for his paper about Holocaust survivors in Maine. The winners presented their research and findings during a Zoom program on November 15th as part of the fall lecture series. Visit [yarmouthmehistory.org](http://yarmouthmehistory.org) for links to the papers and information about the Wellcome Prize.

## YHS English Students Tour and Research

Anne Tommaso's "College Writing" class recently paid three visits to the History Center. The 18 students in this class were tasked with writing a profile of a Yarmouth person or object. Their first visit included a tour of the museum and an introduction to the available subjects, which had been preselected based on available resources and student interests. Two follow-up visits were dedicated to research. Students had access to news clippings, books, and articles as well as artifacts from the collection, like yearbooks and scrapbooks. Depending on their topic, some students also used resources like program recordings, original paintings, and large artifacts such as the weathervane and Sandy the Horse.

Executive Director Katie Worthing briefed students on proper handling of collections objects, answered questions, and helped Anne Tommaso and YHS librarian Amy Roberson guide students through the research process. Look for the students' work on our website later this year.



Above: YHS College Writing students visit.

# Meet Our New Board Members



**Sarah Day** has lived in Yarmouth for almost 12 years. She and her husband, Avery bought the Samuel Drinkwater House on the corner of Main and Elm Streets. After living in the house for three years, they renovated the structure maintaining the important historical aspects of

the home, including a mural painted on the wall above the fireplace which depicts a ship – maybe Captain Drinkwater’s!

Sarah is a graduate of Choate Rosemary Hall in Connecticut and the George Washington University in Washington, DC, where she majored in history with a focus on contemporary American history. After college, she worked at the White House during the George W. Bush administration. Part of her work there was sharing the history of the West Wing and Mansion with visitors.

Sarah served on the Yarmouth School Committee, in her final year as Chair of the Finance Committee and Vice Chair of the Board. She has volunteered with the Yarmouth K-8 PTO and joined the Board of the Friends of the Blaine House. Sarah has two children; Barbara, aged 12, and Henley, aged 10.



**Jocelyn Handy** grew up in California and is a 2009 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She worked in New York City in human resources and theater before moving to Maine with her family in 2013.

She now serves on the Board of Trustees at the

Portland Museum of Art and the Board of Spirit Series, and is the current President of the Board of Royal River Community Players. In relation to the Yarmouth History Center, she has co-written, costumed and directed all three productions of Stroll Haunted Yarmouth, and is thrilled to continue this collaboration between the Yarmouth Historical Society, Village Improvement Society and Royal River Community Players with Stroll Haunted Yarmouth 2022! Jocelyn lives in Yarmouth with her husband and three daughters.



**Melina Roberts** grew up in Connecticut and Maine. Melina graduated from the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, where she met her husband Rob Anderson. After graduating she and Rob returned to Connecticut where she received a teaching degree at SCSU. She taught high

school earth science, astronomy, and served on several environmental groups. Melina researched point and non-point source pollution and served on the Fairfield Connecticut Soil and Water Conservation District Board.

Melina and Rob left Connecticut to walk and bike across the United States on the American Discovery Trail traveling coast to coast from Delaware to California. The couple moved to Baltimore where Melina taught science at Gilman School, bought a house, had two children, served on the board in Mt. Washington, and organized the town’s the Fourth of July Parade.

In 2010 Melina, Rob, and their sons moved to Maine and soon after took a year off to travel the world as a family. Returning to Maine Melina acted as President of Yarmouth’s K-4 PTO and served as the Harrison Middle School Liaison. In 2016 she helped establish the current Royal River Community Players. In 2018 RRCP partnered with the History Center and the Village Improvement Society to produce an annual show that tells local historical stories about the people who lived here before us.

*(Handy and Roberts portraits/Photo Credit Randy Billmeier.)*



**Showing Until  
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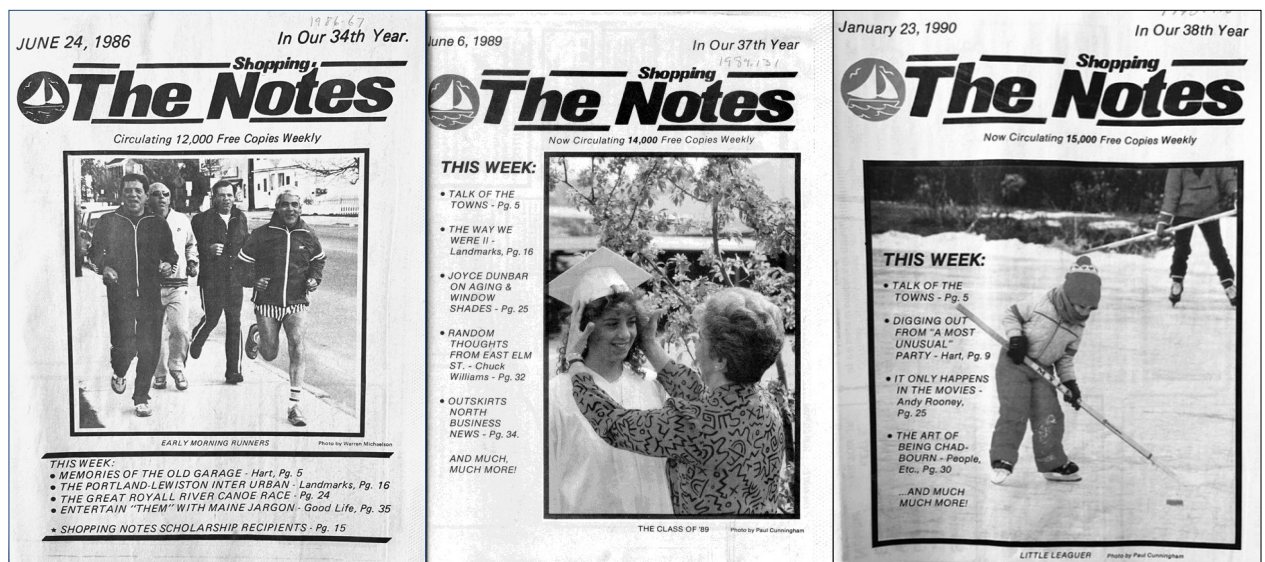
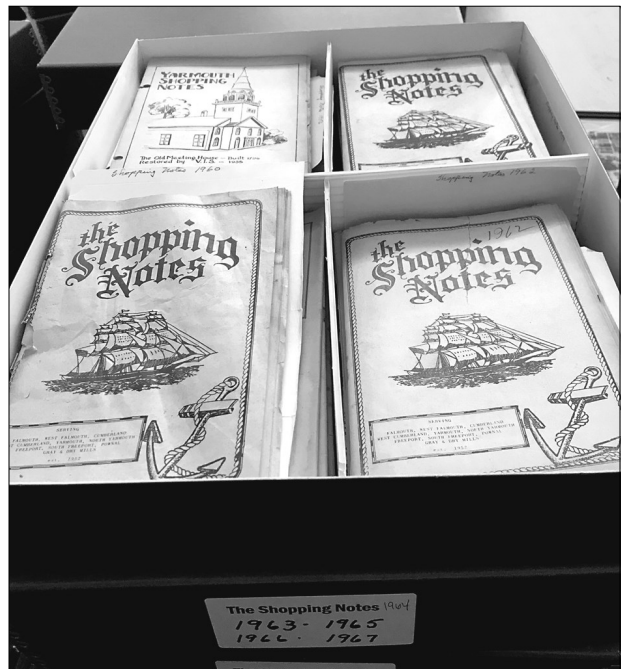
**MAYA KUVAJA  
DECONSTRUCTING VENUS**



Above: A fraction of *The Shopping Notes* collection of newsprint issues spanning more than 60 years of publication.

Although it was a little nerve-wracking to pack up and ship out the earliest issues for our first wave of digitization, I am thrilled to announce that our new database is live and accessible from our website: [yarmouthmehistory.org/the-notes/](http://yarmouthmehistory.org/the-notes/). The digitization staff in Iowa worked carefully and conscientiously as they scanned and indexed issues from 1953 through 1976, which are now available for all of us to enjoy.

We have almost every issue from 1954 and 1955 and spottier coverage from the '60s and '70s, but the collection nevertheless feels like a fascinating time capsule of Yarmouth's more recent past. The collection is easily searchable by year, issue, or search term, making it simple to browse the content and travel back in time. Users can even create digital clippings to share on social media. I am so excited about the possibilities this offers for our organization and community. I do hope you'll explore and enjoy!



Above top: *The Notes* in 1963-1967. Above: A sampling of *The Shopping Notes* covers: 1986, 1989, and 1990.





Above: Sarah Day, Pam Adams, Binks Colby-George, Caroline Knott, Barb Parkhurst, and Julie Benavides inventory and photograph artifacts.

Right: Julie Benavides and Barb Parkhurst sort the collection's folding fans.



## Collections Inventory

This past November the Collections Committee met to continue photographing artifacts and updating item descriptions for the Historical Society's archive database. The workday progressed through boxes of artifacts with the bulk of the day's work focused on photographing and inventorying folded fans.

Why so many fans? In eighteenth century the fashion of the times dictated that every proper woman should carry a fan. The fashion accessory was still required by etiquette through the reign of Queen Victoria, 1837-1901. It was during the second half of the nineteenth century that popularity of the folded fan began to decline.

After the boxes were inventoried and artifacts photographed, the information was entered into the archive database. These photographic records, updated descriptions, and location notes are invaluable and allow for immediate access for research and exhibits. We want to thank the Committee for volunteering their time for this vital, ongoing project.

## Help Us Make Time Travel Easier—Support Digitizing *The Notes*!

The History Center plans to continue digitizing the remaining issues of this collection. Please consider supporting his project by making a gift designated to digitizing *The Notes*!

Do you have a special Yarmouth year, event, or person you would like to honor? Let us know with your gift:

To the Class of 1982! Clam Fest 1976! Wedding Day 1958!

We will acknowledge these gifts in our newsletter and on our social media sites along with updates.

Donations can be made online at:  
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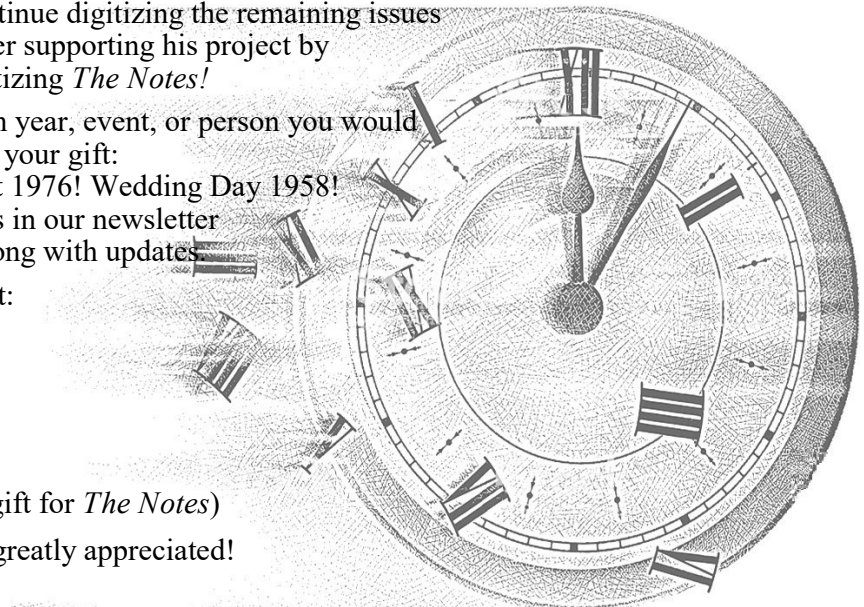
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Your support for this project is greatly appreciated!



# Thank You For Supporting the Annual Fund!

## Gifts from February 5, 2021 to February 1, 2022

We are grateful to everyone who gave. The Fund covers the overhead expenses of the History Center, which means that every dollar donated goes toward preserving and sharing the history of Yarmouth.

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***Thank you!***

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**Gift In Memory of  
William John McGonagle of North Yarmouth**  
Bob Chamberlain

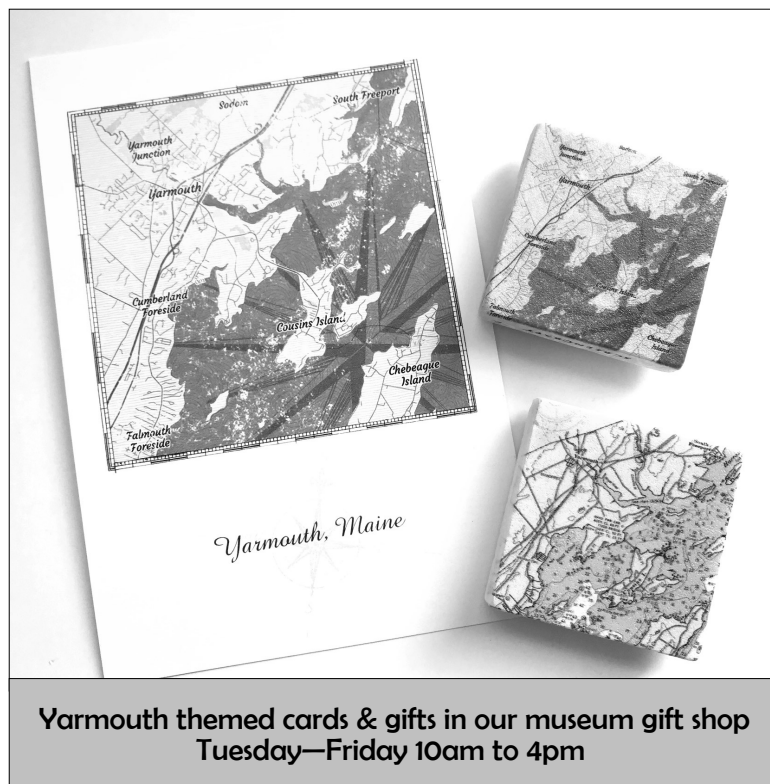
**Gift in Memory of Roger N. Vaughan, Jr.**  
Hazel Currier

**Gifts In Memory of Diana Hibbard**  
AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary Post 2  
Thom Buescher  
Evelyn Hubal  
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**Gifts In Memory of Janice Chamberlain**  
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Michael & Heidi Morrill  
Joan Russell  
Judy Elfring  
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From the four remaining "Domino Dames"

**Gift In Memory of Janice and Steven Chamberlain**  
David Haskell

**Gift In Memory of Raymond Sawyer**  
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