

Yarmouth History Center Newsletter

Summer 2022

118 East Elm Street, Yarmouth, Maine

207-846-6259

Yarmouth's Visitors Days 1959

Katie Worthing, Executive Director



Above: Yarmouth Fire Department's ladder truck taking part in the Visitors Days 1959 Parade.

Whenever anyone asks me what I enjoy most about my job, I typically respond with two answers. The first is that I love working with our collection, from researching to cataloguing to preserving its many hundreds of objects. The second is that every day is different and I'm never sure what's going to walk in the door.

This was especially true about a year ago, in May 2021, when Steven Pellerin, historian for the Maine Vintage Race Car Association, contacted me to inquire about a potential donation. He related that he had been studying and sorting a collection of negatives that had been donated to the association by someone whose father had a photography business in the South Portland/Scarborough area from the 1940s through the 1960s. In Steven's estimate, there were roughly 8,000 negatives in the full collection.

Although most of these images were related to auto racing, he had found a batch in the "miscellaneous" section that appeared to show a parade on Main Street in Yarmouth. Despite the small size of the negatives (some measure just 2.25" x 2.25"), Steven's sharp eyes had picked out the Yarmouth Theatre and Canal Bank, now the Key Bank at 188

Main Street, along with the Yarmouth Fire Department's ladder truck and a 1959 Ford Convertible, carrying Mrs. Maine, supplied by Hubbard Motors of Yarmouth. There were parade scenes as well as pictures of boat rides, fishing contests, and horses. He had guessed that the event might have been a precursor to the Clam Festival and wondered if we would be interested in adding the negatives to our collection.

Of course I said yes. And what a treasure trove it turned out to be! In all, we received 110 negatives, containing gorgeously composed photos that brim with details in every scene, from the ordinary (setting up a raffle) to the charming (little kids dressed in costume) to the downright surprising (waterskiing on the Royal River!). There were a lot of parade shots, showing a variety of floats from local businesses like Down East Village and Harri-man's IGA, as well as community events like dog and horse shows, a band concert at Merrill Memorial Library, and a beauty contest. The images are captivating in the way they convey so vividly snippets of everyday life in Yarmouth.

Continued on page 7

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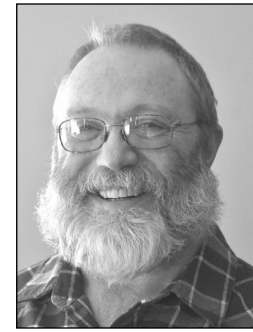
Society members.

From the Chair

An electronic time capsule. That is how I view it. Last fall the Yarmouth History Center received a donation of *The Shopping Notes* archive issues and made the decision to digitize them and make them available online (found at yarmouthmehistory.org/the-notes/). Each weekly *Notes* issue contains a treasure trove of details on local news, schedules, sports, business and classified advertisements that reflect the day-to-day happenings of Yarmouth and surrounding towns. Tidbits like book reviews, coupons, election updates, and cooking tips can be found. Open up an issue and dive in. Best yet, the digitized *Notes* collection is searchable by year, issue, or desired word.

So far, we have managed to scan and index *Notes* issues from 1953 to 1976. We plan to continue to digitize the remaining issues of this collection as we have resources available. Please consider supporting this 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? Class of 1984? Wedding Day 1979? Let us know with your gift. We will acknowledge these gifts in our newsletter and on our social media along with updates!

Thanks again for your membership and support! Explore the *Shopping Notes* today!



Binks Colby-George
Chair, Board of Trustees



The Notes Project

The next phase of *The Notes* digitization project is scheduled for late this summer. Donations can be made online at: yarmouthmehistory.org or mail to the Yarmouth Historical Society, designate your gift for *The Notes*.

Thank your for your support:

Sam Heck, Scott Logan, The LaBrie Family, Elizabeth Milton Fortin, Elizabeth Marin, Catherine Morrow, Sherry Anderson, and Amy Holway Self with a dedication: 2015, *the year The Notes re-published my Mother's Poem "October Reflections" by E. H. Holway. She passed away from Covid in November 2021. At the time it meant so Much that The Notes published her Work. Now it is priceless. Thank you. A. H. Holway.*

Putting History to Work



Above: Director Katie Worthing, USM intern Grave Atwood, and a very full skirt. **Below:** Grave Atwood investigating garments in the History Center's collection.

Last year the University of Southern Maine History Department approached the Yarmouth History Center to invite our participation in the “Putting History to Work” program. The program’s goal is to connect USM students majoring or minoring in History with local museums and archives so that students can gain direct experience working in the field of history. Students enrolled in the “Putting History to Work” program receive course credit and a stipend for their work. Yarmouth History Center’s Executive Director Katie Worthing outlined career related topics and identified skills that would provide a history student with a meaningful internship experience.

The internship program, funded by USM, placed Art History major Grave Atwood at the History Center for a three month, part-time position beginning in February. Grave, eager to put their skills and knowledge to work, embarked on a number of collections projects at the Center, cataloguing items in our PastPerfect database and creating more detailed records and finding aids. The History Center was also able to offer them an opportunity to create and build an exhibit in a chosen area of interest. Grave focused their project on a forensic investigation of Ann Louise Taber’s mid-19th century wedding dress, which is part of Yarmouth Historical Society’s collection. From observations and comparisons with other garments

from the same time period and research of the fashion trends of the time Grave was able to form some theories as to what inspired the alterations of the dress over time.

Visitors can view the culmination of Grave’s investigation later this summer at the History Center. “It was exciting to support Grave’s research and work on this fascinating project,” said Katie Worthing. “This internship program offered by USM is a great opportunity to meet the next generation of historians and to offer them a chance to explore and experience the many facets of the profession.”

We want to congratulate Grave on their graduation and wish them the best of luck in the future.



The Rare Privilege of Dying of Old Age in 1850

B. Craig Stinson, Yarmouth Historical Society Member

On April 9, 1850, my ancestor James Hill died in Yarmouth, Maine, at the age of 84. His official cause of death, as listed in the U. S. Federal Census Mortality Schedule, is “old age.” Of the 35 people to die that year in Yarmouth, he is the only one purported to have died from old age.

How many other residents of Cumberland County, Maine, died of old age that year? And if not old age, what was the primary cause of death in 1850?

A study of these mortality schedules is an inexact science. Different doctors covered different communities, and not only were their ways of describing the cause of death inconsistent with one another, it appears that some were better educated and took more interest in underlying causes. Some were specific in describing the cause of death, others freely used generic terms like “chronic” and “sudden.” Increasing the challenge is that the medical terms used to describe various maladies have changed between then and now, and some conditions that were thought to be unrelated are now seen as parts of the same, while others, which were described in general terms like “dropsy,” are now described more pointedly toward the cause behind the edema manifesting in various parts of the body. Plus, the doctor’s handwriting is not always easy to read!

With that said, a total of 1,359 deaths were recorded in Cumberland County, Maine, in the 12 months between June 1, 1849 and May 31, 1850. Of those, 1,266 had a cause of death listed. About a third of the deceased had resided in Portland, the rest in 29 additional towns in the county.

By far the leading cause of death was consumption, claiming 309 people that year (including a few for scrofula). At 24% of the total, this means that one in four people who died that year in Cumberland County died from consumption.

Next in frequency came deaths caused by dysentery (87), cholera (50), diarrhea (30), or general inflammation of the bowels (48).

Scarlet fever killed 66 people, 5% of the Cumberlanders who died that year.

“Dropsy” (55) was also somewhat commonly listed as a cause of death, although whether the various doctors meant to describe what we now know as congestive heart failure is not clear.

Finally, we get to “old age” (53) as a cause of death. About 4% of people who died in Cumberland County in 1849-1850 made it to “old age” before they died.

Typhoid fever (45), croup (45), and a generalized category of “fever” (60) each amounted to about 4% of the deaths that year.

A total of 35 people died in Yarmouth in 1850. Causes of death, from oldest to youngest:

male	84yrs	old age	female	29yrs	consumption
male	74yrs	disease of heart	female	23yrs	inflammation of the lungs
male	75yrs	tumor	female	19yrs	consumption
female	69yrs	dropsy	male	18yrs	cholera
male	67yrs	inflammation of bladder	male	16yrs	consumption
male	65yrs	dysentery	female	15yrs	consumption
male	62yrs	consumption	female	5yrs	dysentery
female	60yrs	consumption	female	3yrs	dysentery
female	53yrs	inflammation of bowels	male	3yrs	dysentery
female	45yrs	dysentery	female	2yrs	dysentery
male	36yrs	consumption	female	2yrs	consumption
male	35yrs	typhoid fever	female	2yrs	dysentery
female	34yrs	consumption	female	2yrs	dysentery
female	34yrs	dysentery	female	2yrs	dysentery
male	32yrs	cholera			

Continued from page 4

Lung fever (pneumonia) (35), inflammation of the brain and brain fever (meningitis or encephalitis) (35), and throat distemper (29) are also variously described.

Some other causes that each account for about 1% or less of the year's deaths include accident (22), whooping cough (12), drowning (11), childbirth or "child bed" (7), "infancy" and "teething" (6), influenza (3), gravel (kidney stones) (3), smallpox (3), intemperance (2), and poisoning (2).

Causes appearing only once include deaths by choking, lightning, insanity, worms, ship reeky, being kicked by a horse, and suicide.

In Yarmouth itself, dysentery took 14 lives (40% of all Yarmouth deaths), mostly little children. Consumption took nine more (26%), mostly young adults.

In 1850 Cumberland County, Maine, one could die from a bewildering array of diseases, epidemics, illnesses, conditions, or disorders, almost all of which were imperfectly understood and had no known remedy. But one could also die from accident, drowning, or even lightning strike. And while not as dangerous as in previous decades, a woman could also die from giving birth, and her child could die simply from being an infant.

It was a rare privilege to die of old age - only four people in a hundred made it that far. Our James Hill was one of the few who lived to see that day.

Source: U. S. Federal Census Mortality Schedules, 1850-1885, Cumberland County, Maine, 1850, pages 1-52.



Above: Detail of the Hill family billboard monument located in Yarmouth's Baptist Cemetery.

Below: Hill family billboard monument.



If you would like to learn more about the Hill family and their billboard monument located in Yarmouth, visit our website to view a recorded lecture with Craig Stinson and local gravestone historian Ron Romano. Access the video link by clicking Videos, found under the News & Events heading on our homepage. Or meet us in person at the Baptist Cemetery on June 25th, details on page 8.

About the Author

Craig Stinson is a retired United Methodist minister who lives in Edmond, Oklahoma. He holds a BA from Southern Methodist University, a Master of Theology from Perkins School of Theology at SMU, and a Doctor of Divinity from Oklahoma City University. Craig is also a dinosaur hunter. While he lived in the Oklahoma Panhandle, he found a phytosaur in the Triassic formation. The creature is 210 million years old. Craig and his wife Krista also chase total solar eclipses around the planet. They have managed to experience totality ten times - from places as nearby to him as Wyoming to as remote as Papua New Guinea. Lately, Craig has developed an interest in meeting his "dead relatives" from various centuries and crafting narratives around their often-surprising lives.



Above: Melina Roberts presenting Pam Adams with a 'Golden Trowel Award' at the May Board meeting.

Trustees Meet in Person

January 2020 was the last time the Yarmouth Historical Society Board of Trustees was able to meet in person. Taking advantage of the favorable conditions of this past May the Board gathered at the Center for an in person meeting.

There was plenty of business to attend to but the meeting was not without a few special features to mark the occasion. Lemonade and delicious spring themed cookies baked and decorated by Trustee Betsy Langer were enjoyed by the trustees as they socialized after a long period of meeting via Zoom. At the meeting Pam Adams was recognized with a 'golden trowel award' organized by Melina Roberts to acknowledge Pam's work organizing volunteers to maintain the Center's garden. Pam will still be working in the garden this season but has passed the supervising duties on to Melina.

The Center's garden was rehabilitated in 2019 following a garden plan designed by local master gardener and member Susan Carter. Now with the new plants established, the garden is a tribute to all who worked on it.

Yarmouth's Olive Gray

Last month the Yarmouth History Center staff along with some of its trustees were given special access to the Maine Historical Society to view the *Northern Threads* exhibit. The show is an exhibit of clothing from their collection and follows the fashion trends over time. This show is the first of two exhibits and features clothing from 1780 to about 1889. The second scheduled for August, will feature clothing from 1890 to 1980.

It was a treat to find on exhibit a rare eighteenth century small child's dress that once belonged to Miss Olive Gray, born in North Yarmouth in 1779. Miss Gray was the youngest of twelve children and became a celebrated school-teacher in North Yarmouth from 1816 to 1843, teaching in both private and public schools. Her last teaching post was in the public school of district Number Nine (Yarmouth's East Main Street neighborhood). She is remembered in the book *Old Times* where it is said that she was of "more than ordinary education and accomplishments, her eccentricities and great precision of manner repelled from her the attentions of the other sex." Olive never married and lived to be eighty-one years old.



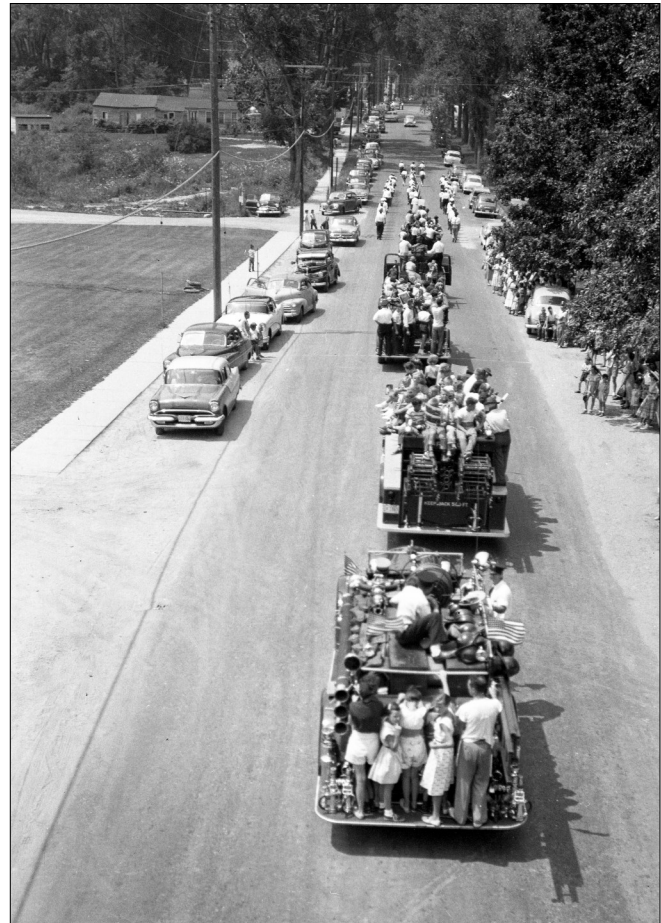
Above: Olive Gray's dress on display at Maine Historical and, from Yarmouth Historical Society's collection, a detail from a page of Olive Gray's notebook.

Yarmouth's Visitors Days 1959

Continued from page 1

Once I had spent some time looking at the negatives and thinking about the clues they provided, my next step was to turn to our archives to see if I could figure out the occasion behind these wonderful scenes. Since most of the sleek new cars in the parade photos were 1959 models, I had a very clear time window. Knowing that Yarmouth's Chamber of Commerce had participated in a couple of the statewide "Millionth Visitor" celebrations around 1960 and that Howard Small had played a big role in bringing horse shows and races to Yarmouth in his Vacationland Fairs of the early 1960s gave me a few search terms to try in our database. It didn't take long to find a small collection of materials from Yarmouth's Visitors Days of July 24, 25, and 26, 1959. Sure enough, the original program preserved in our collection confirmed the slate of events that was captured in the photos, right down to the coronation of festival queen, Linda DeLorme.

Our new *Shopping Notes* digital database yielded additional finds, including peppy advertisements for the festivities and a schedule of events. The database, along with our collection, also helped me piece together a rough timeline of these annual summer celebrations, starting with the first Millionth Visitor celebration in 1958 and continuing with Visitors Days from 1959 through 1962, Vacationland Fair in 1962 and 1963, and eventually the Clam Festival from the mid-1960s onwards. Some years, like 1962, even brought two consecutive summer events to town! With the event fully identified, it was time to get a better look at these negatives and share them with the community. We worked with local designer and photographer Bob Delaney to create digital scans of the collection, enabling us to see the images in more detail and print and share them more easily without risk to the original objects. It has been wonderful to see several of our favorite images blown up into the large format prints that are now on view at the History Center through the summer. With the expected return of the Clam Festival this year, I hope you'll stop by to take a look at Yarmouth's summer celebration of 1959. You might even see a familiar face or two in the photos! We're hoping our visitors will be able to help us identify some of the people pictured.



Above: A parade view from the Route One Bridge.
Below: Visitors Days Queen, Linda DeLorme posing for promotional pictures on the Royal River.



Cemetery Walk and Talk with Ron Romano, June 25, 2022

Billboard Monuments

FREE - 11am at the Baptist Cemetery, Hillside Street, Yarmouth



Visit yarmouthmehistory.org for more information

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This program is made possible by the Leon and Lisa Gorman Fund

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