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It's a Small World After All

by David Leighton Mitchell

No way! This can't be true. There must be some mistake.

That was my immediate reaction when the ancestry.com genealogy report on my father's ancestral tree arrived in the mail a few months ago. The report revealed that many of my ancestors beginning with Deacon Jacob Mitchell, Jr. (1672-1744) were buried in Yarmouth's Pioneer, Ledge, and Old Baptist cemeteries.

What was so astonishing is that our family had lived in Yarmouth from 1958 to 1965 when my late father, Jack Mitchell, served as NYA's Headmaster. All that time — and right up until my stunning discovery last fall — no one in our family had any inkling that Dad's ancestors had ever lived anywhere near Yarmouth. We had always assumed that his ancestors had largely remained near Plymouth, Massachusetts after the first of them, Experience Mitchell, had arrived with other Puritans from Leiden, Holland in 1623. Adding to my astonishment was the revelation that two of Jacob Mitchell's descendants were among the founding trustees of NYA, and the son of one of them was NYA's first Rector (Head of School)!

While growing up, I had heard stories that my ancestor Ensign Jacob Mitchell and his wife, Sarah, had been killed early one morning in 1675 at the outbreak of King Philip's War between English settlers and indigenous tribes led by Metacomet ("King Philip").¹ Jacob and Sarah had been riding horseback while fleeing Plymouth to seek safety at the Russell Garrison in Dartmouth, Massachusetts. Fortunately Jacob's and Sarah's three children — Jacob, Jr., Thomas, and Mary — survived as they had were already inside the Garrison.

The three children were raised by their uncle, and they lived for several years in Kingston, near Plymouth. What I learned most recently is that one of the three, Jacob, Jr., a farmer and



Above: The NYA class presidents in 1961. Author David Mitchell is in the lower left. *Courtesy of David Mitchell*

blacksmith, moved to what was then called North Yarmouth — for reasons I have yet to uncover — in 1727 with his wife, Rebecca Cushman, and their four sons and four daughters. Jacob and Rebecca built a stockaded house on Lot #91, at the rear of what is now Holy Cross Cemetery. Their home was known as the "Mitchell Garrison" and later as the "Whitcomb House" and served as a fort for local residents; a tunnel was built from the home's cellar to the nearby Royal River. Jacob became one of the first members of the Board of Selectmen in 1793 and was one of five residents appointed to lay out roads, divide marshlands, and oversee undivided timber lots in North Yarmouth.

Continued on page 3

¹ For further reading and the latest scholarship on King Philip's War, consult *Our Beloved Kin* by Lisa Brooks, available in our gift shop and at local libraries.

From the Chair

I have been thinking a lot recently about change. It has been front and center in my mind as I find myself changing jobs after 33 years at the same company. I have decided I needed to challenge myself with something new, which is scary and exciting at the same time. I look forward to seeing what new opportunities await.

Change is something the Yarmouth History Center deals with on a regular basis. Which farm became a drive-in movie theater that then became a grocery store? What houses were displaced when Interstate 295 came through Yarmouth? Who graduated from Yarmouth High School in 1971? How has the price of a pound of hamburger fluctuated in the last 50 years? When a change happens in Yarmouth the YHS is here to notice and preserve a record. Change is also evident as we welcome our two new YHS Board of Trustees members: Ann Miller and Dale Shields. You can learn all about them on page 5 of this newsletter.

Spring is YHS membership season. The Center will be sending out renewal letters to those memberships that come due in the spring. Membership is the best way to keep up to date on upcoming guest lectures, exhibits in the Stonewall Gallery, and special events like the 3rd Yarmouth Trivia Night at Brickyard Hollow on April 3, at 6pm (see below). Please keep a lookout for your membership renewal letter. We hope you will join us and continue supporting our work by renewing your membership.

Finally, I want to offer thanks on behalf of the Board of Trustees to the Annual Fund donors. Your support allows the YHS to constantly challenge itself with something new. I hope you look forward, as I do, to seeing what new opportunities are on the horizon.



Binks Colby-George
Chair, Board of Trustees

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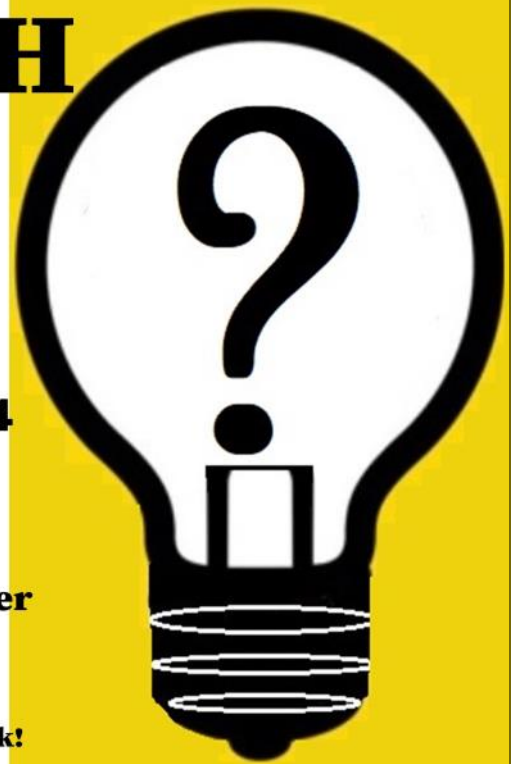
YARMOUTH TRIVIA NIGHT

Wednesday, April 3, 2024
Brickyard Hollow
Fun starts at 6pm

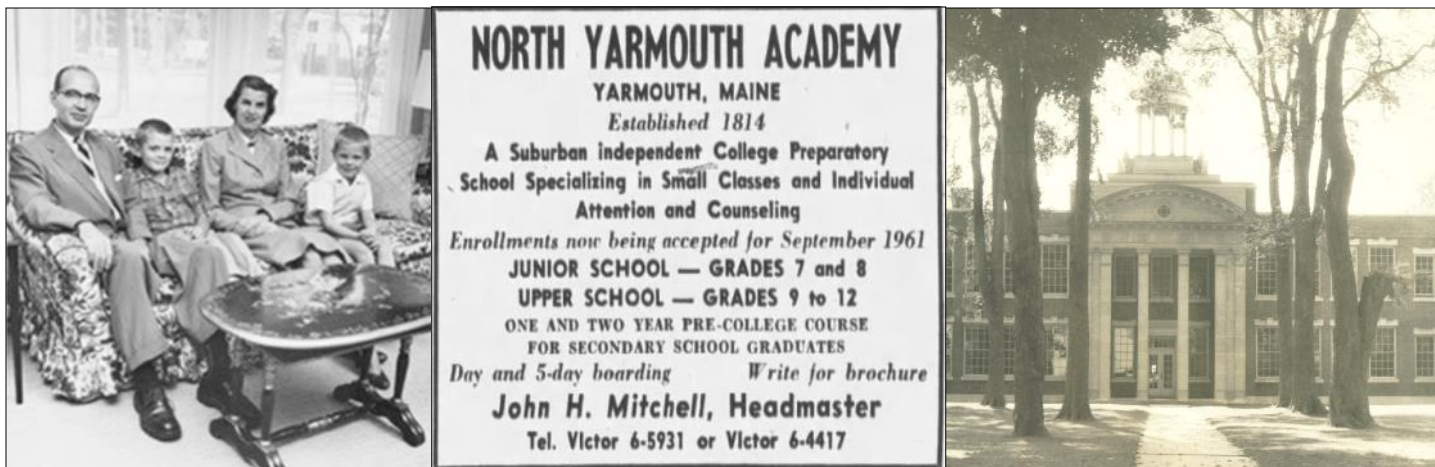
Hosted by Yarmouth History Center

Bring a team or form one when you arrive!
(max team size-6)

Great prizes! Great fun! Great food and drink!



It's a Small World After All *Continued*



Above left to right: The Mitchell family in the living room of the Weld House on Main Street, Yarmouth, from left to right: Jack, David, Harriet, and Bruce (*Courtesy of David Mitchell*); North Yarmouth Academy advertisement for the 1961/1962 academic year (Source: NYA Alumni, Facebook, March 23, 2023); North Yarmouth Academy's Curtis Hall.

Continued from page 1

Among their grandchildren were Dr. Ammi Ruhamah Mitchell (1762-1824) and Seth Mitchell (1770-1821), both founding trustees of NYA. Ammi practiced medicine at 33 Center Street and later at 333 Main Street, was one of the original major donors (\$150) to establish NYA, and served as NYA's board president.

He also served as a founding trustee of Bowdoin College, was instrumental in getting Union Wharf built in 1796, and went on to serve 10 terms in the Massachusetts legislature in Boston. He is buried in the Old Baptist Cemetery. A son of Ammi and his wife Phebe Cutter, Rev. David Meaubeck Mitchell (1788-1880), served as NYA's first Rector (Headmaster) in 1815-1816, but he proved to be ineffective and resigned within a year.²

I've digested this ancestral information with amazement but with some regret: that my father had never known of his ancestral connection with Yarmouth and particularly with NYA while he was still alive. I am confident that it would have given him great satisfaction to know that his ancestors figured prominently in NYA's — and Yarmouth's — formative years.

Our family had moved to Yarmouth in the summer of 1958 from Fryeburg where Dad had served as Fryeburg Academy's Headmaster. We lived in the white colonial home at 149 Main Street (now condominiums), next to

Russell Hall. Our family ate nearly all of our meals in NYA's dining facilities in Academy Hall and later in a building behind Bates Hall (153 Main Street). With my mother's strong support, my father worked tirelessly in transitioning NYA from its role as both the town's public high school and independent day/boarding school for non-residents to total independence. NYA's student population was about 180, nearly all boys except for about 10 girls. Half of the students were 5-day and 7-day boarders, of whom many attended as "PGs" (post grads); the other half were day students. In athletics, our sports teams competed with other independent academies (Berwick, Brewster, Bridgton, Fryeburg, Kent's Hill, Hebron, Saint Dominic) and Bowdoin Freshmen, as well as local public high schools.

The seven years I lived in Yarmouth were among the happiest years of my life. I attended Rowe School for three years, and then entered 7th grade at NYA in 1961. My waking hours at NYA were filled to the brim with rigorous classes, sports, lots of homework, and scholarship duty cleaning classrooms, waiting tables, and washing dishes in the dining hall. One of my favorite duties was helping flood the outdoor hockey rink, located behind the IGA grocery store near Route 1, on cold nights.

Continued on page 5

2 For more information about Yarmouth during this era, refer to William H. Rowe's *Ancient North Yarmouth and Yarmouth* and Augustus W. Corliss' *Old Times*.

PROGRAM: Yarmouth: Pivotal Era of Change

Join us at the History Center at 1pm, on Saturday, May 4 to learn more about Yarmouth during this pivotal era of change from 1955-1962. These years brought a new public high school, the bridge to Cousins Island, and the arrival of the interstate, all of which changed the way people lived and worked in Yarmouth. Come hear from a panel of speakers who will share their insights and experiences from growing up in Yarmouth during this time.

In and Around the History Center

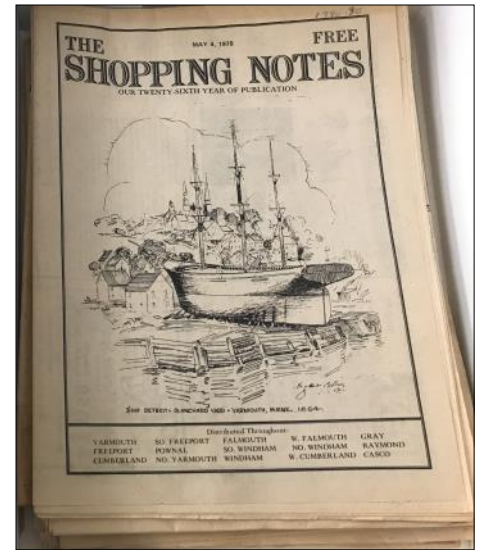
Update on *The Shopping Notes* Digital Archive

The Yarmouth History Center is excited to announce the expansion of *The Shopping Notes* digital archive. As one of Yarmouth's own newspapers published from 1953 to 2020, *The Shopping Notes* is a treasure trove of information and images from Yarmouth most recent past. The issues from 1953 to 1992 are now fully digitized and available online. Search by a keyword or browse year by year: it's a window into the past few decades of Yarmouth's history.

The Yarmouth Historical Society recently received a grant from the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation to help us continue this digitization project. Soon all the issues from 1993 to 1995 will be added to this growing archive.

In 2021 the History Center accepted the gift of decades of past issues and photographs from the LaBrie family, owners and publishers of *The Shopping Notes*. Since then, *The Shopping Notes* has become our first significant digital archive. We are thrilled to be able to offer free access to the archive and thankful to the Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation for their support

Right: A 1978 newsprint cover of *The Shopping Notes*



Documentary Film of The Great Portland Fire 1866 Wins 2023 Wellcome Prize



Above, left to right: Katie Worthing presents Chris Noreika his prize; Ruins of the Great Fire, July 4 and 5, 1866, by Joseph E. Baker

Yarmouth History Center announced the winner of the 2023 Wellcome Prize for Student Historians this past November. First prize in the film competition went to Chris Noreika, a student at North Yarmouth Academy, for his documentary film about the Great Portland Fire of 1866. Chris' film documentary is available for viewing on our website in the 'News' section.

The Wellcome Prize is Yarmouth History Center's student history competition, which is 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 make a film about their findings. Entries are judged on the quality of research and presentation and winners are invited to share their findings with the public as part of the History Center's fall lecture series. More information about the prize <https://www.yarmouthmehistory.org/the-wellcome-prize/>.

In and Around the History Center

Meet Our New Board Members

Dale Shields: Thirty-five years ago, Dale had an experience that changed her life and helped to direct the course of her life. In 1986, she became a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer, working for the Philippines Department of Agriculture on a remote island in the southern part of the country. Living and working for more than two years in a different culture, becoming fluent in another language, being treated like family in so many homes, changed the way she looked at family, education, and participatory community development. After this experience, Dale got her Master's in International Development and Social Change from Clark University and wrote her thesis on the gender issues in natural resources management that she observed in the Philippines. She had children and for 20 years home-schooled them in a cooperative learning community which she co-organized.



Dale Shields

Since her arrival in Maine in 2011, she has applied her passions for education, health, and community to support her new Greater-Yarmouth community. She became an Iyengar Yoga instructor and taught hundreds of students at the YMCA, her home studio and in other settings. She's become an active volunteer in her community, as the Community Testing Director for the Yarmouth COVID Task Force and a founding member of the Yarmouth Community Alliance for Racial Equity (YCARE), a grassroots community organization working to dismantle racism in the criminal justice, education, and health

systems, among others. In late 2021, Dale began working for the Maine Association for New Americans (MANA) based in Portland. Her role as Office Manager brings her full circle back to using her organizing, administrative, and communications skills within immigrant communities so they may reach their full potential.

Ann Miller: Dr. Ann Miller brings a unique breadth of commercial experience to the boardroom after decades of leadership roles in biopharma. As an accomplished executive with clinical training, she has built, launched, and scaled 20 products across multiple therapeutic areas, continuously applying "lessons learned" to optimize brands and manage portfolios. In her current board roles, Dr. Miller is recognized for her valuable insights and advice on clinical-stage commercialization, portfolio management, communications/messaging, launch preparation and brand strategy. Dr. Miller currently serves on the Board of Inovio Pharmaceuticals; previously, she served on the Board of Puma Biotechnology and Allena Pharmaceuticals. In the nonprofit space, Dr. Miller served on the National Osteoporosis Foundation Board of Trustees for 10 years. Dr. Miller holds a BA in Chemistry and Medical Degree from Duke University; she trained in Internal Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. She is a Maine Angel investor and an Olympia's Leader Advisor to high school girls, as part of the Olympia Snowe Women's Leadership Institute.



Dr. Ann Miller

It's a Small World After All *Continued from page 3*

I was active as a Cub Scout and later as a Boy Scout, and I have fond memories of walking downtown occasionally to get a Coke or Popsicle at Vaughn's Drug Store or Daken's Variety Store. We had annual baccalaureate ceremonies for NYA at the Old Meeting House on Hillside Street, but I never had any clue that many of my ancestors were buried in the adjacent cemetery.

As I think back to the years I spent in Yarmouth and reflect on the vital role that NYA played in shaping me as a human being, these remarkable ancestral ties I've recently uncovered provide a profound spiritual connection with this special region and this academy.

Dave Mitchell, 73, and his wife, Judy, split their time between homes in San Francisco and Portland, Oregon. Recently retired, Dave spent his professional career as the director of fundraising programs at Stanford Medical Center, UC-San Francisco Medical Center, and Scripps Institutions for Medicine and Science. He is a member of the Yarmouth Historical Society.

Right: Mitchell family cenotaph, Baptist Cemetery, Yarmouth, Maine



Thank You For Supporting the Annual Fund!

Gifts from February 2, 2023 to February 12, 2024

These donations help cover the operations of the History Center, which means that every dollar donated goes toward preserving and sharing the history of Yarmouth. We are grateful for your support!

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In memory of Marsha Newick
Memorial gift in memory of Marsha Newick
In memory of Marsha Newick
Gift in memory of Marsha Newick, colleague at Harrison Middle School
In memory of Marsha Newick
In memory of Marsha Newick, former student of Ms. Newick

In memory of Marsha Newick
Memorial in memory of Marsha Newick
In memory of my wife, Marsha J. Newick
Memorial gift in honor of Marsha Newick
In memory of Marsha Newick remembered by her nephew and his wife

In Recognition

Maura Goessling and Yarmouth History Center for their work and partnership with Stroll Haunted Yarmouth
From the Royal River Community Players



Student History Contest Wellcome Prize



PRIZES

1st prize \$1000
2nd prize \$500
3rd prize \$250

Three prizes
awarded for
both Film &
Research Paper

Offered by Yarmouth History Center
A competition open to Maine high school students.
Create a video or write a research paper on any
historical topic relating to Cumberland County.

Visit yarmouthmehistory.org for more information
Entrants should be in high school during the fall of 2024



SUMMER INTERNSHIP

"One of my fondest memories from this experience was poring over an aged scrapbook with articles about events in Yarmouth going back to the early 1910s. As I entertained different topics for my research paper, the Village Improvement Society of Yarmouth piqued my interest. I knew that I had found the topic I had been searching for after learning that my late grandmother had been a faithful member since moving to Yarmouth in 1998." Sarah D. - Summer Intern 2022

Paid internship at Yarmouth History Center
Information at yarmouthmehistory.org



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