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“Yarmouth’s Citizen Poets” Tour

Katie Worthing



Above: History Center Executive Director Katie Worthing shares a poem with Jane’s Walk participants at the restored Grand Trunk Railroad station on Main Street.

Two things happened on Saturday, May 3 that made it feel like a remarkable day, worthy of a headlining story in our summer newsletter. The first was that we enjoyed a brief pocket of rain-free weather in the morning, a true Saturday rarity* for those of us living in the northeast. The second was that, for about an hour, the words and verse of some of Yarmouth’s citizen poets from the past 200 years came to life again thanks to the participants in “Meter, Rhyme, and Time: Yarmouth’s Citizen Poets,” our newest guided walking tour.

We hosted the tour as part of the annual Jane’s Walk festival, organized by Maine Preservation, Greater Portland Landmarks, and other partners. Jane’s Walk is a global festival of free walking conversations inspired by community activist and writer Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), who is best known for sparking grass-

roots participation in shaping the planning and development of communities. Jane’s Walks combine the simple act of exploring a place with personal observations, local history, and civic engagement.

For the Yarmouth edition of Jane’s Walk, I spent some time thinking about ways to create an interactive walking tour that focused on stories and people that we don’t often have the chance to highlight. Thanks to our new prose and poetry reading series, Local Buzz (returning in September), I had poetry on my mind and thought it would be fun to unearth a few poems from our archives and match them to special points along a local walk.

*To be honest, the morning ended in a light drizzle, but the first half was gloriously dry!

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From the Chair

Summer in Maine seems to finally be making an appearance – my lawn is quite overgrown after all the rain we have been having. Yes, the lawn mowing season is here, but with that summer also brings a host of other activities happening not far from our front lawns.

Throughout the summer the History Center has six Open House dates scheduled at the Old Meetinghouse. If you have ever been curious to see the inside of the Meetinghouse there will be plenty of opportunities to do so (see the schedule below). The Center will have staff and volunteers on hand to share the building’s history and answer any questions visitors may have. These Open House events are free and open to the public. We hope to see you there!

If you are looking for more opportunities to discover our local history, the Center also offers three self-guided walking tours of Yarmouth. These tours are easily accessed through our website via a smart phone. Once on the website you can choose your tour and follow along as you walk throughout the village. The tours explore “Mills and Main Street,” “Yarmouth’s Harbor,” and “Yarmouthville and the Old Meetinghouse.” The walking tours are a fun activity to do with your family or used as an outing with your summer guests. Find all three tours at: www.yarmouthmehistory.org/walking-tours/

If you prefer a paper tour the Center has some available in the museum’s reception area. And while there, what better time to tour your local history museum. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10am to 4pm.

Finally, a request: Membership renewals often come due in the summer and are easy to put off until later. Please take the time to renew your membership if needed.

Thank you for your continued support!



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Published quarterly for
Yarmouth Historical
Society members.

Mark your Calendar! Old Meetinghouse Summer Schedule:

- Saturday June 28
 - Thursday July 10
 - Saturday July 26
 - Saturday August 9
 - Wednesday August 20
- Celebrating Yarmouth’s
176th birthday!

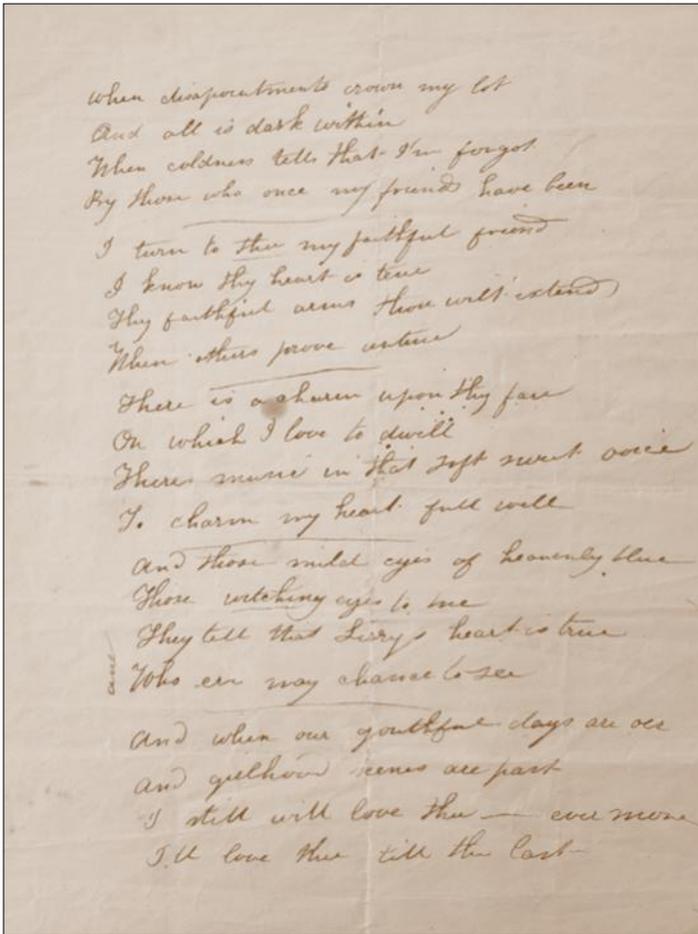
Open House Hours:
1pm to 3pm
Hillside Street, Yarmouth, ME



Yarmouth nautical
flag apron

Barbeque Season!
History Center Gift Shop
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Tues - Sat 10 - 4

Citizen Poets *continued*



Above: Jane's Walk group stops at Center and Main.
Left: Capt. N. Humphrey love poem.
Below: Postcard view of Yarmouth's Main Street.

people, like Frank Knight, “The Bard of Sligo Road,” whose lifetime of care for Herbie the elm tree inspired one of the tour’s most poignant poems.

With the hope of sharing these wonderful poems with more people, we will be offering our “Yarmouth’s Citizen Poets” tour later this summer and fall at the following times: Friday, August 8 at 10:00; Saturday, August 23 at 10:00; and Friday, September 12 at 10:00. **The tour is free, but space is limited. Please email Katie Worthing, kworthing@yarmouthmehistory.org, to reserve your place.**

We'll begin at the History Center and continue to Main Street, stopping at several points of interest along the way. Each stop will include some historical background information, but the focal point for each location will be a poem specially selected from our archives. Please wear comfortable shoes and tune up your poetic sensibilities. Participants will be invited to read aloud some of the selected poems to the group and share their thoughts about the poems, people, and places we encounter. I hope you'll join us!



Continued from page 1

My initial worry that I wouldn't find enough to fill a tour was completely unfounded; it turned out to be quite difficult to narrow down my choices. Spanning the 1840s through 2010, the final group of poems selected for the tour represents a wide range of subjects and approaches and conveys richly personal ideas of place and time. Some pieces were published, while others were handwritten on scraps of paper and carefully saved by family members. Some are anonymous, others are signed.

As we walked along East Elm and Main Streets on May 3, the dozen participants on the tour gamely participated in breathing new life into these pieces. We read aloud eight poems, marveling at their relatability over the centuries, laughing at a few humorous turns of phrase, and tearing up more than once.

The poems gave us a chance to encounter people like Yarmouth-born Elizabeth Oakes Smith (1806-1893), a woman of vast talent whose poems comprise only part of a sprawling literary and intellectual career that has largely been forgotten until very recently. We also got to experience the poetic works of more familiar Yarmouth

In and Around the History Center



Above: First place winners 'Know-It-Alls' celebrate another win. Above right: Master of Ceremonies, Historical Society Director Katie Worthing, quizzes the crowd. Below right: Members of the Yarmouth High School Film Club, our last place finishers.

Yarmouth Trivia Night 4

The History Center hosted Yarmouth Trivia Night 4 at Brickyard Hollow this past April. The event followed the Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce's unveiling of the 2025 Yarmouth Clam Festival poster. Team *Know-It-Alls*, winning for the third consecutive time, pulled ahead early in the quiz and won by three points.

The *Townies* captured second place for the second time and hope that Yarmouth Trivia 5 will be their night. Third place was a three-way tie! And after two tiebreaker questions teams *Send it 92*, *Shut your Mouth*, and the *McGs* were still deadlocked. To end the tie all three team names were placed in a box and the evening's Master of Ceremonies drew a team name for the winner. Luck was on *Send it 92*'s side and they won the drawing and were awarded the third place.

Members of the Yarmouth High School Film Club, there to film the Chamber's unveiling of the 2025 poster, stayed to play. They were surprised that, despite coming in last, they won a prize — 'Tried the Hardest But Still Came in Last.' Looking forward to teams returning for the next event to challenge the reigning champions!



Film Makers Research

The Yarmouth Clam Festival's history spans six decades of community spirit and support. This year to celebrate the Festival's 60th year the Chamber, wanting to capture the history of this event that began as a local clambake and grew into Maine's largest free-admission festival, is working with the Yarmouth High School Film Club to compile this history into a documentary. The History Center has been assisting the club by providing time to research the Clam Festival memorabilia, photographs, and documents in the collection. We look forward to seeing what they create.

In and Around the History Center



Above: Trustee Kendall Harnett crafts the silhouette of Herbie; Butch and Jean Goff visit their old friend Sandy. Below: Trustees Betsy Langer and Stacey Pardales, Ted Jordan, and Jessie McGrath host activity tables, and a visitor works on a puzzle.

History Center Hosts Family Events

In February and March, the History Center's Program Committee hosted two family friendly events. The first featured Herbie the Elm Tree and the second celebrated Sandy the Mechanical Horse.

At the Herbie event visitors were able to measure themselves against a silhouette of Herbie's stump that was traced out on the Center's floor. All were amazed by how large Herbie's trunk was, 9 feet, 2 inches at its widest point. Visitors participated in tree-themed activities and learned Herbie's history.

The Sandy celebration featured old-fashioned toys from the collection. There were a number of activity tables where visitors could make simple toys like clothes pin dolls and button spinners. Also available were toys to

play with. These toys were supplied by our staff and trustees. There were many nostalgic moments experienced by our visitors while operating the elevator of the Fisher Price Family Action Garage and hearing its bell ring.

The Sandy event had two surprise guests. Butch and Jean Goff, former owners and operators of Goff's Hardware on Main Street, came to the Center to attend the event. The Goffs donated the mechanical horse to the Historical Society when they retired and closed the store. Thank you Butch and Jean! Sandy is still operational and available for our youngest visitors to ride. Thanks to a patron's donation of dimes, all rides on Sandy are free. To all the trustees and volunteers who helped with this event, thank you! Follow our social media or keep an eye on our website for these and other programs to be offered this fall.



In and Around the History Center



Above, Left to Right: Trustee Ed Libby tackles knotweed on the river slope; Mike Gengras trims perennials; Charlotte Brennan tends to ornamental grasses; and Mitch Feeney, trimmers in hand, tidies up the vegetation along the walking path.

Challenging Season for Annual Garden Clean-up

Despite the endless cycle of rain we experienced this spring, the History Center's garden volunteers were able to clean up the winter debris and tidy up the grounds. It looks lovely and is now ready the growing season.

The work done by this group in the fall made the standard sprucing of the flowerbeds a fairly easy task. Focus on the riverbank continues with efforts to control the invasive plants. Volunteers cut locust shoots and tackled the bittersweet and knotweed to prevent further growth and spreading. There were a few discoveries... fungus on the Bearberry that resulted in cutting away the affected

areas of the plant. The presence of green shoots coming from the plant were encouraging. A fungicide will be purchased to prevent it from returning. A load of small rocks will be needed along the driveway to replace those lost to the plow and spring storm runoff.

The History Center would like to thank our Trustees Melina Roberts, Kate Huntress, Mike Gengras, Mitch Feeney, and Ed Libby, as well as our volunteers Charlotte Brennan and Rob Anderson for sharing their time and energy to support our gardens.

A New Roof for the Old Meetinghouse

It has been a busy spring not only with the work of maintaining the grounds at the History Center but with work at the Old Meetinghouse. The Center has been working with the town and the town's preservation committee to schedule some required maintenance for the historic building.

At the top of the list was replacing the shingles on the roof. Choosing the roof shingle color seemed to be the lengthiest task in the process. All involved wanted to make sure the selected color was appropriate for the historic building.

The roofers, on the other hand were speedy in stripping the shingles, preparing the surface, and installing the new shingles. If you blinked, you missed it. Now completed, the project should not have to be addressed again for another 30 years.



Above: Meeting House roof in progress. Photo by Rob Anderson.

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Lectures

This fall the Yarmouth History Center will host Avery Yale Kamila for two lectures. Avery Yale Kamila is a Maine journalist, food writer, historian of vegetarianism, and community organizer. Both lectures will be held at the Center. Lectures are free and open to the public.

Wednesday, September 10th at 7pm
“Maine’s Untold Vegetarian History”



Wednesday, October 8th at 7pm
“Moral Treason: Elizabeth Oakes Smith's Early Editorship, the Anti-Matrimonial Society, and the Graham Riot”

Save the Date: Yarmouth Historical Society’s Annual Meeting will be held October 8th at the History Center.



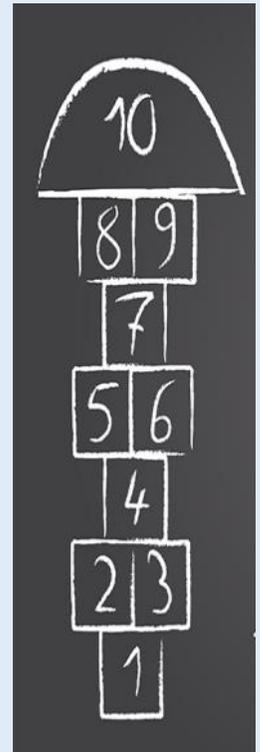
Save the Date! Family Game & Craft Day!

Join the Yarmouth Historical Society Program Committee on Saturday, September 27 for a fun day of kid-friendly games and crafts!

Make your own cornhusk doll, decorate a hopscotch rock, and learn about one of Yarmouth’s first candymakers.

Participants will even have an opportunity to “buy” some old-fashioned penny candy!

Stay tuned to our website and social media for more information and details about how to register for this free event.



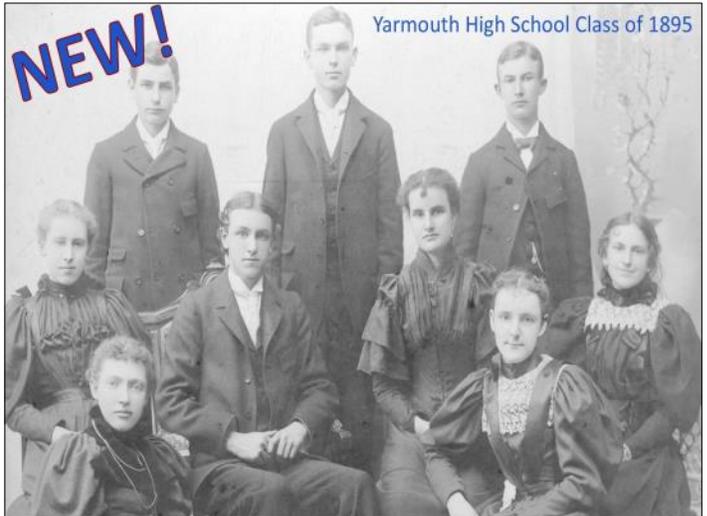
Yarmouth to Yarmouth

Keith and Lorraine Doust of Suffolk, UK visited the History Center during the extended rainy spell in early May. Here in New England to visit friends, Keith and Lorraine were visiting the places named after the UK towns and cities they have a connection to. Keith, who went to school in Great Yarmouth, wanted to check out Maine’s Yarmouth.



Keith and Lorraine Doust
Yarmouth, ME.

Lorraine and Keith were also planning to stop in Dover, and York as they made their way to Logan Airport for their flight home.



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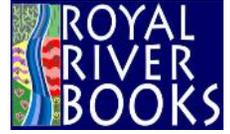
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