

This Issue:

Page 1

Camp Will Octa

Page 2

From the Chair
Walking Tours

Page 3

Camp Will Octa
continued

Page 4

Jane's Walk
Science Class
Visit

Page 5

Garden
Clean-up

Page 6

Neighborhood
History Event
History at the
Market and
Clam Fest

Page 7

Young Authors
Camp
Meetinghouse
Open House
Schedule

Page 8

Thank you
Business
Members!

Camp Will Octa on Cousins Island

By Katie Worthing



Left: Charles Duran at Camp Will Octa circa 1920s.

In June, I was invited to be the guest speaker at the Cousins and Littlejohn Island Improvement Association's summer potluck dinner, held at the historic Community House. As I considered possible subjects for the talk, I thought it might be a good idea to adapt my "Tours and Tourism in Yarmouth" program to the islands and started thinking about what summer on the islands might have been like 100 years ago. How would people have traveled to the islands? Where would they stay? What would they do for fun once there?

I pulled out steamer schedules from our archives, checked out maps of the various Casco Bay island routes (almost all reaching Cousins and Littlejohn from Portland and Falmouth, not Yarmouth), and added pictures of camps, cottages, and hotels to my presentation. The logistics of summer travel in the first part of the 20th century started to come into full focus. I had the basic facts down: if I were magically able to time travel back to 1915, I think I could have navigated the timetables and booked a room at the Rockmere Hotel on Littlejohn for a week's vacation, full board included.



Right: Marti Mayne and Lincoln Fuller at home 2026.

But it was when I started delving into newspaper databases to find clippings of island comings and goings in the 1910s and '20s that the familiar rabbit hole of research tugged me deeper into the search and a richer picture of summertime island life emerged. The newspapers of the day, particularly the *Casco Bay Breeze*, included detailed columns about the arrivals and departures of island residents and visitors: who was staying where and for how long, which guests were visiting and from where, who was planning an excursion or a picnic. The *Breeze* provided this information for almost all of Casco Bay's inhabited islands.

As usually happens, it was a tiny clue in one of these *Breeze* columns, dated August 13, 1919, that helped me make the leap from dry timetables and logistics to the palpable joy of an island summer: "*Mr and Mrs Charles Duran of Boston are occupying Will Octa, their summer home here.*" Both names, the Durans and Will Octa, pinged first my memory and then

Continued on Page 3



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From the Chair

Summer has begun and the History Center has been embracing this beautiful weather by providing current and future members with many outdoor opportunities to celebrate and learn about Yarmouth's history. Need some inspiration to get outside? The History Center has a few offerings for you, your family, and your summer guest.

Recently the History Center offered a walking tour of the Bridge Street historic district on the Royal River. If you're interested in embarking on a history tour our website (<https://www.yarmouthmehistory.org/walking-tours/> and the QR codes below) can provide you with a self-guided, historical tour to follow. This is a great way to actively discover our local history. Available tours include the *Mills and Main Street* tour (note: the Forest Paper Company at Third Falls section of this tour will be inaccessible this summer due to the park renovations), *Yarmouth's Harbor* and the clues you can find that point to its bustling shipyard past and Yarmouth's seafaring citizens associated with this neighborhood, and *Yarmouthville and the Meetinghouse* featuring the history and architecture of the neighborhood surrounding the Old Baptist Meetinghouse.

From 3pm to 6pm on Thursdays, Yarmouth's Farmer's Market sets up in front of Town Hall, selling fresh produce, oysters, baked good, flowers and more. Stop in to pick up your dinner ingredients and look for the Yarmouth History Center's table on July 16th and August 13th, where we'll be providing some fun facts and information about Yarmouth (see page 7).

In a few short weeks, the Yarmouth Clam Festival will be celebrating its 61st year! After you've polished off your fried clams and lime rickey, take a stroll under the Route 1 bridge to see the History Center's photography exhibit of historical Yarmouth, including Clam Festival photographs from years past. This is a wonderful opportunity for the Center to share images from the Historical Society's photograph collection. Last year, many attendees found themselves, their friends, or their neighbors in these historical photos!

We've begun to host our summer schedule of Open Houses at the Old Meetinghouse on Hillside Street. Join us on August 20th, from 1pm to 3pm outside of the Old Meetinghouse, to celebrate the anniversary of Yarmouth's founding with cake and beverages (Open House schedule can be found on page 6).

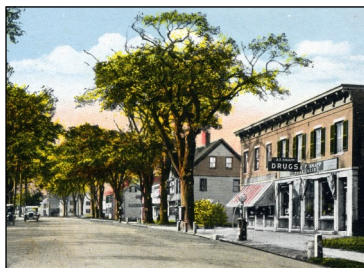
We look forward to seeing you enjoying the outdoors here in Yarmouth, and we hope you have a wonderful summer.



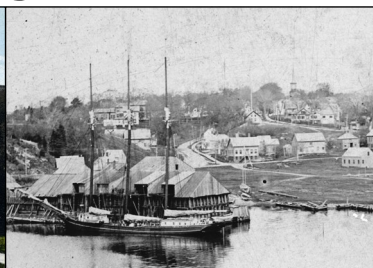
Jessie McGrath

Jessie McGrath
Executive Chair, Board of Trustees

Online Walking Tours



Yarmouthville



Yarmouth's Harbor



Mills & Main Street



Camp Will Octa *Continued from Page 1*



Two views of the interior of Camp Will Octa: On the left, the Durans circa 1920s, and on the right the Mayne/Fullers 2026

our database as I retrieved from our archives the Duran family's wonderfully rich photo album documenting their summers on Cousins Island in the 1920s.

What an artifact! Even though we don't know much (yet) about the Duran family's lives off of Cousins, their warmth, joy, and sheer delight in their island summers is palpable in the album. Photos of croquet games, cart-wheels, picnics, swimming, fishing, boat adventures, pets, and family fill the book. It's impossible to look at these photos and not feel the fun radiating from these pages, even 100 years later. The Durans surely knew how to enjoy a Maine summer and they clearly adored Camp Will Octa, their summer home on Cousins, with its abundant windows and high perch overlooking the western side of the island. Here was the joyful and familiar human element that my timetable research had been lacking. Who wouldn't want to spend a summer with the Durans on the island?

In another stroke of archival luck, the Durans' Camp Will Octa still stands, in much the same form, just a few doors down Cousins Street from the Community House, where my talk was presented and where current owners, Marti Mayne and Lincoln Fuller, were in attendance. After the talk, Marti and Lincoln invited me inside their home, now a year-round residence. The legacy of the Durans still infuses the house, with its banks of big, bright windows in the living room and the cozy front porch, where many of the family's group photos were taken. The warm wood floors, beadboard paneling, and woodstove all evoke the house's history even as it continues to adapt and evolve to suit contemporary lives.

Marti and Lincoln have lived in the house since 1996 and clearly treasure it, both for its history and location as well as its role within their family's lives, just as the

Durans did. Of the house, Marti writes: *If home is where the heart is, then we can say that the house is the heart of our family. We can't imagine a better place to live, bring up a family and now retire. We've worked hard to maintain the historic aspects of the Will Octa house, including a recent reglazing and refinishing rather than replacement of the 27 windows that create the unique look to the house. While modern conveniences have been added, we truly believe that the good karma from the Duran family continues to imbue life in this house 100 years later. We look forward to the kind of joyful family gatherings here that the Durans enjoyed 100 years ago.*

I often say that local history is neither solely local nor static. It is through research and connections like these, without fail, that I am reminded of the

truth of this statement. A look back to an island summer at the start of the 20th century brings archival connections to the wider Casco Bay community, to Portland and Boston, and all of the many places from which island residents journeyed. The fun and activity of a 1920s summer day comes through so fully in the Durans' photo album that it makes palpable the joy of their time on the island, even a century later, which in turn is echoed in the care and warmth that still infuse the house now stewarded by Marti and Lincoln. These currents across time and place drive our work to preserve and share Yarmouth's stories.



Camp Will Octa circa 1920s

In and Around the History Center



Jane's Walk

Yarmouth Historical Society hosted its second walking conversations tour as part of the annual global festival, Jane's Walk. Festival tours combine the simple act of exploring a place with personal observations, local history, and civic engagement. Jane's Walk was founded by the friends of community activist and writer Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) as a way to honor her life and activate her ideas.

This year the Yarmouth History Center collaborated with Yarmouth Arts Alliance to explore Yarmouth's public art and learn some fascinating snippets of local history along the way. Yarmouth Art Alliance's guides Linda Horstmann and Gail Clark shared insights into the beautiful sculptures, installations, and paintings that are available for free public viewing in Yarmouth's village center and the Merrill Memorial Library. History Center Executive Director Katie Worthing joined the guides by adding details about each site's historical and architectural significance. Despite the precipitation the tours were well attended and enjoyed by all.



Above top: The Jane's Walk group begins their tour inside the History Center before (above) venturing out in the rain to continue exploring Yarmouth's public art. Photo credit Beth Russell.



Science Class Visit

Harrison Middle School seventh graders recently visited the History Center with their science teachers to research the history of the Royal River.

Known for their innovative and interactive science curriculum, this year's 7th grade class came to learn how the Royal River has changed over time.

Director Katie Worthing hosted the students with an introduction to the river's history from the mills that sprang up along the falls to the heavy industry that followed during the industrial revolution to the work done in the past fifty years to improve the river's ecosystem.

The students asked thoughtful questions and left with a new understanding of how history can play an important role in aiding scientific inquiries.

Left: HMS 7th graders visit the History Center

In and Around the History Center



Above: Garden clean-up volunteers: (front) Yarmouth Historical Society Trustees Melina Roberts, Ann Miller, and Alison Moore are joined by Society member (back) Rob Anderson and student volunteer Mayank Singh.

History Center Garden Clean-up

Winter left our garden volunteers plenty to tidy-up before the summer arrives. Fortunately, this year we did not have to contend with endless rainy weekends like last year. Our volunteers found plenty of debris to remove from the garden beds as well as great clumps of grass and weeds trying to get ahead of the upcoming growing season. The shrubbery too required some debris removal and a fresh trimming to encourage new growth. The work on the riverbank continues to eliminate and control the bittersweet and knotweed that have taken over the bank just off East Elm Street. It was encouraging to see that last year's efforts prevented some further growth and spreading but more work needs to be done. We expect this to be an ongoing project for the next few years. By the afternoon, grounds were looking great and ready for summer!

The History Center would like to thank Trustees Ann Miller, Alison Moore, and Melina Roberts, and our volunteers Rob Anderson and Mayank Singh for their help beautifying the History Center grounds. Thank you!

Below: Rob Anderson on the riverbank, Ann Miller in the front garden, Mayank Singh above the river, and Alison Moore sweeps up.



Beyond the History Center

History on Church Street

Our thanks to Melina Roberts for lending her yard and spectacular view of the Meetinghouse for the Center to host our third neighborhood outreach event. The weather and company could not have been better. It was fun to visit with the neighbors who were able to join us to discover some interesting facts about the history of their neighborhood and town.

As a special addition to the event a few of the guest were treated to an impromptu garden tour by our host and had the opportunity to peek at the interior of the Reverend Thomas Green house, circa 1798.

There will be more chances this summer to discover local history. Join us for one of our open house events at the Old Baptist Meetinghouse. Since it was built the structure has undergone many changes and has been used for many purposes. Our docents will be ready to show you around the building and answer questions about the building's history.

If you cannot wait for history to come to your neighborhood or attend an open house at the Meetinghouse, know that there is plenty of history to explore at the Yarmouth History Center Tuesday thru Saturday, 10am to 4pm. Stop by for a visit!



Above: Executive Director Katie Worthing welcomes guests to the History Center's third neighborhood outreach event.



Above left to right: Melina Roberts sharing history at Farmers' Market and Steamer at the History Center's Exhibit

History at the Farmers' Market and Clam Festival!

On July 16th and August 13th the History Center will be making guest appearances at Yarmouth's Farmers' Market. While shopping, stop by! Ask us your local history question and pick up your free 'History to Go' pack. They go fast so be sure to get one before they're gone! We will also be at the Clam Festival hosting an exhibit under the Main Street bridge sharing a number of photographs from the Historical Society's collection. It is going to be an entertaining display of images — some historic and some not so 'historic!' You never know who you might recognize in these images from Yarmouth's past!

Beyond the History Center



Above: Seeking inspiration the Young Authors Camp visits the Old Meetinghouse on the Hill on Hillside Street.

Right: Poem, written by Yarmouth's Caroline Weyenberg, inspired by artifacts on exhibit at the Yarmouth History Center

Young Authors Camp

We know it is summer when the Young Authors Camp visits the History Center. Sponsored by the University of Southern Maine, the Young Authors Camp offers budding writers a chance to hone their craft and become published authors! Thirteen years ago, the camp used the History Center as their headquarters. Due to the popularity of the program, the group outgrew the Center's Hamill Room and moved to the high school. This year, we welcomed them to both the museum and the Old Meetinghouse. We were excited to be able to add the Meetinghouse to their list of inspiration destinations.

The camps are a weeklong, full immersion into multiple genres of writing. The group writes in a combination of indoor and outdoor locations around the towns where the camps take place. This year camps are located in Yarmouth, Gorham, and new this year, Westbrook. As an added bonus for us, Yarmouth's Lorrie King, one of the camp's instructors, sends us samples of the authors' work inspired by our collection. It is always surprising to see what inspires the writers during their visit.

Four Little Measuring Cups

by Caroline Weyenberg



Four happy little cups
All made out of clay
Sit silent with the artifacts
And dream about the days

Of the hustle and the bustle
The sound of clinking pots
And when you plunged in sugar
What a rush of joy you got

If those cups could talk
I wonder what they'd say
But the secrets hidden in those four
Will never fade away

The china got the glory,
The linen was the king
But sitting in their little case
They wouldn't change a thing.

Old Meetinghouse Summer Schedule:

Thurs July 9

Sat July 25

Sat August 8

Thurs August 20

Open House Hours

1pm to 3pm

**Hillside Street,
Yarmouth, Maine**



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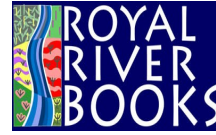
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