

Jonesport Historical Society Newsletter

“Preserving Our Heritage”

Message from the President

I am pleased to announce the election of Jean M. Guptill and Betty Kelley to the Jonesport Historical Society Board of Directors.

Jean M. Guptill is a native of Jonesport. Jean retired after a long career with the US Postal Service and serving as the Postmaster of Jonesport. She was active on both the state and national levels of the National League of Postmasters. Jean has served on the board of the Friends of the Library. Jean works for the Town of Jonesport as a tax assessor. She is married to Lee Guptill. Jean replaces Michele Pollard who moved back to California.

Betty Kelley grew up in Burlington, Iowa, a Brewer-sized town along the Mississippi River. She “escaped” the Midwest immediately after high school and has lived the majority of her life in Maine, in both Portland and Jonesport. “From away but not so’s you’d notice it” is her motto. Betty majored in Liberal Arts at the University of Southern Maine and worked at Falmouth High School as Asst. to the Principal and later at the University of Maine at Machias in several capacities, the last being Asst. to the President. While at UMM she delved into their Book Arts program which led to her becoming a paper artist. In retirement she established a home craft business and online Etsy shop, Downeast Paper Works. Board member and Jonesport native, Eric Kelley, is her husband. They live just beyond Sandy River Beach, sharing their home with their little dog, Bindi, tending many gardens, and managing a summer rental cottage.

Bill Plaskon, President

Dedication of the new Jonesport-Beals Bridge

On Sunday August 16 State Representative Robert W. Alley, Sr. fired a cannon to begin the dedication ceremony of the new Jonesport-Beals Bridge. More than 100 people gathered on the bridge as the oldest citizens from both Jonesport and Beals arrived in cars which met at the center of the bridge. Beals Historian Dan Davis then gave a speech which included a poem written by Irene L. Beal for the original bridge opening in 1958. Dan ended his speech with a prayer of dedication. Beals residents 91-year-old Lorraine C. Wallace and 89-year-old Osmond M. Beal then cut the ceremonial ribbon, using the same scissors that cut the ribbon for the original bridge dedication. The Beals and Jonesport Historical Societies were each given half of the ribbon for their archival collections.

Autumn 2020

2020 Events

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all the 2020 events and Friday night movies are cancelled.

We will try to offer the same events in 2021 that were scheduled for 2020.

2020 Board of Directors

Officers:

William Plaskon, President
Charles Alley, V.P. Emeritus
-- Vacant -- Vice President
Catherine Perry, Treasurer
-- Vacant -- Secretary
Eric Kelley, Jr., Historian

Directors:

Byron Carver, Jr.
Jean Guptill
Kylie Hinkley
Andrew Hutnik
Betty Kelley
Janice Kristo
Charlene Nelson
Nancy Sawyer

Identity Revealed

Three members offered guesses at the identity of the Summer edition's *What Is It?* but only Steve Perry correctly identified the item as a carriage wrench.



of a buggy. The leathers held the grease from leaking out ends of the axle and took up any slack so the wheel could run true.”

As Board Member Eric Kelley explains, “It is a buggy wrench from the days when one wrench and a little bailing wire would always get you home. This wrench is the one Dr. Mansfield used when he showed me how to cut “leathers” and grease the wheels

Dr. Henry Mansfield's Last Buggy Ride

by Eric W. Kelley, Jr., Historian, Jonesport Historical Society

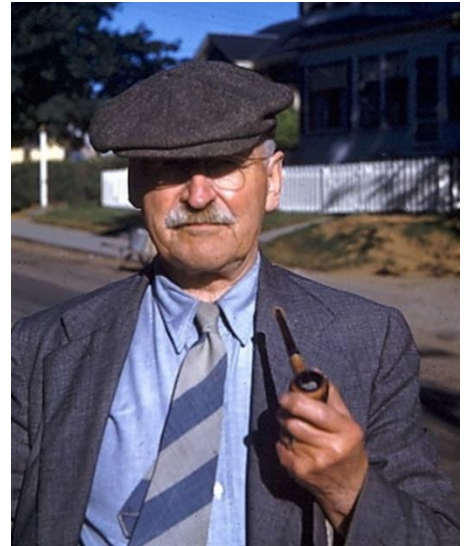
The buggy was generously on loan to me from the Sawyer family for use with my horse Kit and was certainly the Cadillac of its day. The original paint, still in very good condition, was deep green with fine red pin striping on the wooden spokes of the iron rimmed wheels—very dignified. The two seater, with leather rear fenders and convertible top, had seat cushions that were reversible; one side was leather for daily and rainy day use while the other was velvet for church and other more formal occasions. The kerosene lamps, mounted on brackets on either side of the front seat, added a touch of class to what was probably the best buggy in town during its day. The buggy, entrusted to me for a few years, was returned in very good condition to the Sawyer family. I know it was sold some years after that and I lost track of it. Does anybody know where it may be? I'd love to see it one more time.

My horse Kit was a mild mannered and patient nine year old black Morgan mare with a white star on her forehead. Kit stood fifteen hands and could be ridden or driven. I still have my riding saddle and wish I had her again to ride a little but mostly to simply watch her graze in her old pasture. Many in town remember Kit to this day and have memories of adventures on her back or in various wagons on the road and in the saddle on Sandy River Beach. Many of us swam in the pond in her pasture and still refer to it as the Horse Pond.

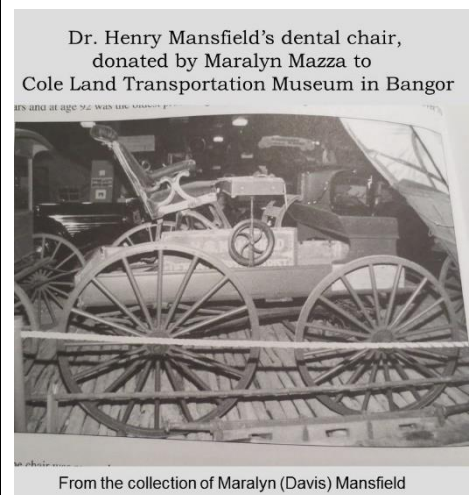
The day, some sixty years ago, that I took Dr. Henry Mansfield on what I believe to be his last buggy ride was in the buggy described above and drawn by Kit. My memories of the day run through my mind like a few snapshots rather than a video which captures so much more detail. Seems strange to me, but the only person I remember being there was Dr. Mansfield although I know there were several others present. Much of the short ride is totally absent and this may be because I know I was stressed regarding the quality of my harness and feared something might let go rounding the steep sharp corner at Danny Hall's Store taking us back onto Main Street.

It was a beautiful day which began early in the morning with me brushing and harnessing Kit in my barn at Mary Jim's Point. I backed her into the shafts of the buggy while threading them through loops attached to the saddle then hooking the breeching to the shafts which were the only brakes for the buggy. Finally, the tugs were attached to the

(Buggy Ride continued, page 3)



Dr. Henry Mansfield
1868—1966



Dr. Mansfield's wagon with dental chair,
now in the Cole Land Transportation
Museum in Bangor.

(Buggy Ride, continued)

whiffletree attached to the buggy and off we were to meet up with Dr. Mansfield in front of the parsonage at Sawyer Memorial Congregational Church for a short ride around Sawyer's Square.

We all gathered by the granite watering trough in the parking lot of the parsonage. Pictures were taken I know, but I never saw them. If anyone has any, I'd love to see them now! I expected Dr. Mansfield to ride in the back seat as I would chauffeur him around Sawyer Square but instead he climbed into the front seat beside me. I clearly remember he had a huge smile on his face and was ready to go. Very soon after we left the dooryard Dr. Mansfield asked if he could take the reins and I didn't need to wonder whether he'd done it before as his experienced hand let Kit know that she was under a confident and able driver.

I don't remember much conversation on our little journey, which may be because I was keeping a close eye on the old harness which my father had helped me salvage from various old barns in the area and fretting the steep hill by Danny Hall's Store which was just ahead. Kit walked smartly along as we rounded the corner by the Worcester-Sawyer Insurance Agency, present-day home of Jonesport Historical Society. Continuing at the same pace we passed the Church on our left and the C. H. Mansfield store on our right, now affectionately known as Harbor House established by Gene and Maureen Hart. Next came The Knights of Pythias Hall on the left, which was torn down in the late 1950s, and just across the street was the building where Dr. Mansfield had his dental office. Wish I could say he uttered words of profound wisdom but I remember nothing. We proceeded on the downward sloping road at a walk and just before the grade turned upward Dr. Mansfield, with a flick of the reins, urged Kit into a trot. She stepped out and easily made the hill and we trotted the rest of the way.

When Dr. Mansfield climbed down, grabbing the top of the wheel for support, he thanked me for the great ride which brought back many memories. He then shook the wheel a little which had some play in it and told me it needed new "leathers" and fresh grease and to stop by soon and he would show me how to do the job. I took him up on it sometime later and it was on that occasion he gifted me with the buggy wrench which was featured in the *What Is It?* of the summer edition of the Jonesport Historical Society Newsletter.

It was a long time ago—60-plus years—but remains a fond memory in my mind. The seventy-six year old man writing this story looks at life very differently than the fifteen year old boy who was in the buggy that day. I'm thinking that perhaps I don't remember much conversation because there wasn't much. I'm wondering now if just maybe Dr. Mansfield was taking a walk down memory lane, for what I remember best is an elderly gentleman, thoroughly enjoying himself, enveloped in happy memories of a well-lived life. I'm very pleased as well that I was a little part of it and shared this time with him.

Spanish Flu in Jonesport

Historian, ardent researcher, and longtime JHS member Linda Harvey became curious about the 1918 flu pandemic in Jonesport and combed through death records for 1918 and 1919. She examined each cause of death, and found that, for each of those two years, about a quarter of the deaths were from influenza. Like the rest of the nation, Jonesport's victims died in the deadly second wave of flu, accounting for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the town's deaths during that period.

In 1918 there were a total of 23 deaths in Jonesport, 6 from influenza, and all 6 occurring late in the year:

7 Oct, Delcina Gray, age 22
20 Oct, Abigail A. Crabtree, age 2
31 Oct, Alice B. White, age 32
31 Oct, Austin L. Dobbins, age 28
29 Dec, Vernon J. Kelley, age 27
29 Dec, Clyde B. Peabody, age 18.

In 1919 there were a total of 38 deaths in Jonesport, 9 from influenza, and all 9 occurring early in the year:

3 Jan, Octavia L. Dobbins, age 8
5 Jan, Harry B. Stevens, age 25
6 Jan, Frederick P. Stevens, age 6 (son of Harry who died the day before)
8 Jan, Athelia Faulkingham, age 73
9 Jan, Horace Peabody, age 42 (father of Clyde who died 11 days earlier)
10 Jan, Molley E. Moulton, age 27
13 Jan, Lena Alby, age 29
2 Feb, Philip W. Higgins, age 1 month
11 Feb, Allen S. Hall, age 9 months.

Worldwide, the Spanish Flu killed a disproportionate number of otherwise healthy young adults age 20-40. The Jonesport influenza deaths reflect that pattern. "The mystery of why so many age 20 to 40 remains" Linda notes, "and it continues to be studied."

Historical History

by Maureen T. Hart

My husband Gene and I moved to Jonesport in 1997 from one of many post-WWII new suburban communities in Long Island, N.Y., where everything and everyone was new. Arriving here, we were impressed by the constancy, the heritage of generations, the mainstay of the traditional fishing industry.

We had purchased the Charles Mansfield building on Sawyer Square. Built in 1897, it was his home and business, a furniture store, a general store, and a beautifully preserved Western Union Telegraph Office still intact with handsome desk, telegraph tapping key, his notary medallion, official documents, ledgers, receipts, newspaper clippings, photos, and the town voter registration log of 1896, with *all male names*, most of these surnames still listed in the current phone book.

Local folks curious about us and our newly renovated B&B & Antique Shop would stop in to chat. We were happy to meet our new neighbors and they were happy to share the pride in their town. A few that we came to know well were Charlie Alley, Donnie Woodward, Sanford Kelley, Barna Norton, and Phil Alley. They enjoyed telling old stories to new ears, and I suspect some became more colorful with each telling. Alvin Smith had worked for Charlie Mansfield as a boy and regaled us with funny tales of his eccentric old boss; setting off a live canon at dawn on Sandy River Beach was a favorite. We heard about fishing, about the sardine industry, ship building, original homes floated from Head Harbor Island, and how Main Street had once been lined with shops for all necessities.

“Creating (an historical society) was on their wish-list, stuck in the procrastination column.”



An organizational board meeting in July 2003.

From left: Gene Hart, Doralies Bobryk, Maureen Hart, Cathy Perry, Paul Mazza, Bill Plaskon, Charlie Alley, Linda Sebok, and Jim Hubert. Missing from photo is JHS President Donnie Woodward.

There was so much history to be preserved and archived before it would be lost to time. In frequent conversations with Charlie and Donnie we asked about a historical society. We learned that an early effort in the 1970s had waned. Creating one was on their wish-list, stuck in the procrastination column. They were surprised and appreciative of people from away wanting to be instrumental in launching the project.

There was already a huge amount of material. Charlie, Donnie, and selectperson Cathy Perry were historians with a passion for genealogy, cemetery records, and interviews with older town residents. There were a trove of artifacts stored above the old fire house. And John Sawyer had

(Historical continued page 5)

(Historical, continued)

volumes of shipping logs and a collection of hundreds of vintage photographic glass plate negatives.

At a meeting for a town comprehensive plan I again expressed hope for a Jonesport Historical Society. My offer to host a planning group was welcomed. And so, on May 23, 2003, seven of us met at Harbor House to begin. Gene and I were there with selectperson Cathy Perry, Charlie Alley, Donnie Woodward, and Linda Sebok and Jim Hubert, a couple with interest in the project who recently came from Ohio. The idea became a reality. We would appoint a Board of Directors, write bylaws and a mission statement, and start a membership drive. We had high aspirations. There would be an appeal to town residents to become involved, to join committees, acquire family photos, documents, artifacts, church records, town records of old houses, buildings, and businesses. Live video interviews would be planned with the eldest residents.

From late May to October things moved quickly. We had nine organizational meetings at Harbor House with Donnie Woodward as President, Charlie Alley as Vice President, Cathy Perry as Treasurer, and Linda Sebok as Secretary. The rest of the Board included Gene and me, Leta Smith, Doralies Sawyer, Betty Smith, and my brother Bill Plaskon.

Bill would take a major role in videotaping live interviews, launching a membership drive, and with his computer expertise, establishing a renowned archives and cemeteries database. Gene Hart created the JHS logo using a vintage ship photo found in the telegraph office. He spent many hours of painstaking work, separating the fused glass negatives, enhancing photo images of the early village. The Mazza family, with Jonesport roots to Henry Mansfield, were supportive, and Paul Mazza provided legal assistance in becoming incorporated in August 2003.

Only five months after our first brainstorming session, we were ready for a public meeting. On October 28, 2003, more than one hundred people came to Jonesport Elementary School gym where the JHS logo was projected on a large screen. The program included two slide shows set to music: the glass plates converted to positive images, and a collection of town photos taken by Dr. John Young in the 1950s and 1960s. It was enthusiastically received with many joining the membership. Growth and progress continued for eight years with monthly meetings in the Jonesport Library, Jonesport Beals High School, or Sawyer Memorial Congregational Church, with a variety of speakers, slide shows, historic movies. The meetings frequently extended to nostalgic conversation among the attendees.

Major progress happened in 2011 when John Sawyer generously donated his ownership of the building on Sawyer Square to the Historical Society. With the hard work of board members and funding from grants, it is being restored to fine condition. It houses a museum for artifacts, a well-used meeting hall, and a central place for one of the best digital archives in the State.

Over the years, Bill worked closely with Donnie to make it an active and relevant organization. The success continues with over 330 current members. Popular public meetings are frequently filled to capacity. It has been a resource for families and researchers from distant places accessing the database. The Newsletter keeps all informed of happenings and upcoming events. For the 15th year anniversary in 2018, a pictorial book was created and introduced at a banquet dinner. Donnie was honored for all his work. Sadly, he died in 2018. The Donald C. Woodward Meeting Room is dedicated to his legacy. Gene Hart died in 2020.

When Gene and I moved in 2014 to the mid-coast to be nearer medical care, we were proud and happy to have been part of the achievement which continues to grow and has become so much a revered part of Jonesport.



History is
before the
bridge ...



The first meeting of the Society will be in the
Jonesport Elementary School Gymnasium
Tuesday, October 28, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

- Introduction to the aims of the Society
- Slide show of 100-year-old glass plates
- Slide show of 35mm photos from the 40's - 60's
- Videotaped interviews of some Jonesport seniors

Please come and take part in this important new endeavor,
share your ideas and memories, and have some fun

Light refreshments will be served

**Flyer announcing the first public meeting
of the new
Jonesport Historical Society,
held
October 28, 2003**

Bridge News

The Downeast Coastal Press: Week of December 1, 1998

Week of December 1, 1998

Beals Island Bridge Weathered Toll Storm

User Fees Collected for Nine Years after 1958 Opening

By HERB CLEAVES

The Beals Island bridge was officially opened on August 9, 1958, to provide a highway link between the island community and the mainland at Jonesport. Forty years later, the Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) has added the structure to a list of 17 that need major repairs or replacement.

Powerful derricks riding oceangoing barges set the steel girders in place atop concrete piers during the construction period in the 1950s. Completion of the \$1.1 million bridge ended the need for ferry services in Moosabec Reach and precipitated moves by the Maine Legislature that led to construction of a similar structure to link Lubec and New Brunswick's Campobello Island. Rep. Sumner T. Pike's bill that year sought approximately \$300,000 to go with federal funds and allocations of \$800,000 from Canada and the province of New

Brunswick for bridge and highway approach work.

At Beals, Uriah Beal operated the island's only scow ferry from May 1934 to July 1954, after which the town voted to provide a town ferry.

The collection of tolls on the Beals Island bridge struck a sour note from the beginning. Town officials represented by Ossie Beal claimed that the island community was paying from 80 percent to 85 percent of the total receipts from tolls and that other similar bridges in Maine were toll-free.

During October 1958, 3,008 passengers cars used the bridge and paid \$3,008 in tolls. In November, 2,513 cars crossed the bridge at \$1 per crossing. During the same month, 3,091 people walked across the bridge, paying \$309.10 in tolls. Revenue from all tolls during the first year amounted to \$45,127. From January 1 to August 8, 1959, a total of 23,351 pedestrians used the bridge.

Tolls were reduced by 50 per-

cent on September 12, 1959. Finally, on July 16, 1967, Governor Kenneth M. Curtis signed a bill to end toll collection as of October 9, leaving toll booths at only two Maine bridges—the Joshua L. Chamberlain span between Bangor and Brewer and a span that carried Route 1 between Kittery and Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

A month later, however, a suit was filed by the Maine Good Roads Association to prevent the removal of tolls at Beals and Jonesport. Complainants claimed the action by the Legislature was unconstitutional, because the act that authorized a bond for the bridge, which was ratified by voters, needed to be acted upon again by the electorate before tolls could be removed.

Finally, on February 27, 1968, the Maine Supreme Court declared that the Maine Legislature was within its rights to discontinue toll-taking on the Beals Island bridge.



August 16, 2020

JHS photo by Eric Kelley, Jr.

Welcome to the dedication of our new bridge to the Town of Jonesport!

Sunday the 16th of August at 2 p.m. in the year of our Lord 2020.

Commencement cannon fire followed by a prayer and reading by Daniel Davis of Beals.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.

Lorraine C. Wallace, Beals, birth July 1929

Osmond M. Beal, Beals, birth Jan. 1931

Dorothea R. Marks, Jonesport, birth Aug 1922

Florence A. Smith, Jonesport, birth Sept. 1922

Coleman F. Smith, Jonesport, birth July 1924

Ernest V. Kelly Sr., Jonesport, birth Dec 1926

(Handing out of Thank you bouquets)

Selectmen of the Town of Beals:

Sandra Woodward, Agnes Smith

Paula McCormack

Selectmen of the Town of Jonesport:

Harry S. Fish, Dwight R. Alley,

William F. Milliken

(Handing out of Thank you gift)

Jonesport Historical Society

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207-747-8228

Located at 21 Sawyer Square

jonesporthistoricalsociety@peabody.lib.me.us

Membership Renewal:

Because of the cancellation of events this year, all membership expiration dates have been extended by one year, so there is no need to pay your 2020 dues. Please do not mail in your 2021 dues or donations until you receive the Annual Newsletter package next Spring. It will include the 2021 brochure and membership/donation form.