

BRHS News March 2019

Researching and preserving our history

From Our Archives



The Indian Tent on the East Side

By Barbara Rumsey
(written July 2005)

The birth of the tourist era in the Boothbay region occurred in the 1870s and 1880s, following the industrial revolution and the rise of the middle class. More people had more discretionary money, so . . . let's invent vacations for the masses! Present or arriving soon after the

first tourist boom were the Indians from Old Town for the summer season. Various families—the Rancos the most well-known and remembered—came every summer to sell baskets, snowshoes, and carved wooden items such as "war clubs" and other shaped souvenirs.

The above photo dates to about 1915, and Harold W. Bishop owned the house at the east end of the footbridge. Harold provided yard space for many years for the basket-selling Indian family, the Sockabasins, from Old Town. The Bishops adopted Ann, one of the Sockabasin girls born about 1918. Virginia Reed Gamage told me she occasionally stayed at the house in the early 1920s to help out when Harold was away. Ann, then a preschooler, would come and jump in bed with her for company. I wish the Boothbay Region Historical Society had an item made by the Sockabasins to mark their presence in town.

But the historical society is fortunate to have a few items made by the Ranco family. Twelve years ago, Emily Gove gave us a war club and a wooden paddle incised with the image of a squirrel and the word "Island" below, dated 1906. As you'd expect, the items were for sale at the Ranco tent, then on Squirrel Island. Her father Allen Gove built many of the cottages out there and the Rancos gave him the items. Last fall, Chet Rittall and I talked about the Rancos; he'd enlisted them to help teach basketmaking to his boy scout troop decades ago. Chet believed that the last place they sold baskets was at his boatshop at the head of the Harbor in the 1960s. I said I regretted that we had no basket at the museum we could definitely tie to local basket makers. The next time I stopped in, Chet gave me one the Rancos made, a great addition to our artifact collection.

For more articles by Barbara Rumsey check our website
www.boothbayhistorical.org/out-of-our-past

Save the Dates!

Tuesday, May 21, 4:00 pm

Annual Meeting of Boothbay Region Historical Society

AND

Life at the East Boothbay Store: Then and Now

Talk with Liz Evans, owner, East Boothbay General Store

Our Annual Meeting is open to all!



(Liz Evans, photo courtesy Peter Southwick)

Come to our meeting, and after a short business meeting, hear Elizabeth “Liz” Evans talk about owning and operating the landmark East Boothbay General Store for the past eleven years. Liz “grew up all over the place” but spent her summers in the Boothbay region. After a number of years as a chef on several different luxury yachts, including Jimmy Buffett’s, she bought the East Boothbay General Store the day before it was to go up for auction in 2008. With Liz’s outgoing personality and culinary skills, the store is a favorite gathering place for summer people and year-rounders alike, proof positive of the message on the entrance sign that says, “In the heart of East Boothbay since 1898”.



Thursday, May 23, 4:30 – 5:30 pm
The Camera Discovers Monhegan:
Island Photographs from 1859 to 1900
With Earle Shettleworth, Maine State Historian

Earle Shettleworth has lectured and written extensively on Maine history and architecture, and is the current State Historian of Maine. In this talk he will focus on the early pioneers of photography on the island, beginning with the first known photograph of Monhegan, an 1859 image of the light house, continues through the emerging art colony of the 1890s, and ends with Edward Robinson of Thomaston, a college professor who made his own photographic record of the island just prior to 1900.



Thursday, August 1, 4:30 – 5:30 pm
Midcoast Maine in World War II
With Peggy Konitzky, historic house manager, Historic New England

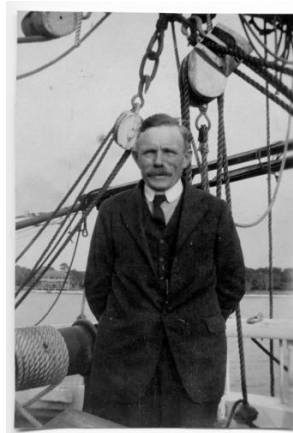
Peggy Konitzky will present stories of midcoast Maine heroes and their remarkable achievements during World War II from her book *Midcoast Maine in World War II*. The shipyard at Bath Iron Works launched a new

destroyer every seventeen days. Bowdoin College had more military than civilian students and held three commencements per year. Boothbay Harbor, Bailey Island and Damariscotta all had military bases, and anyone who owned or sailed a boat was recruited for coastal defense. Women worked at machine shops, registered their neighbors for rationing and volunteered for the Civil Defense and Red Cross.

Thursday, September 5, 4:30 – 5:30 pm

The Life of Capt. Anders Anderson

With John Anderson, historian and author



John Anderson grew up listening to family stories about his beloved grandfather, Capt. Anders Anderson. When John inherited his grandfather's ship logs, he embarked on a journey to learn as much as he could about Capt. Anderson's fascinating life. From leaving his family farm in Sweden as a teenager, to becoming a ship captain in Maine and falling in love with a lighthouse keeper's daughter, the story of Capt. Anderson is a fascinating and moving reminder of a way of life which has since disappeared. John Anderson's biography of his grandfather will be published this summer.

(photo: Capt. Anders Anderson)



Thursday, October 3, 4:30 – 5:30 pm

History of Quilting Trunk Show

With Wendy Caton, award-winning quilter

Back by popular request! Wendy Caton Reed will present fifty of her quilts and discuss historic styles of quilting in her popular *History of Quilting Trunk Show*. Wendy grew up on River Road in Edgecomb, Maine and was taught to quilt by her neighbor Arzetta Poole when she was nine years old. She has been quilting ever since and is well known for her original interpretations of traditional designs. Wendy's quilts have been exhibited at the National Quilt Museum and the New England Quilt Museum, and have won awards including the Purchase Award from the American Museum of Folk Art.

BRHS photograph to be in Maine Historical Society exhibit



Indian child in basket, ca. 1915

This photograph from the photography archives of Boothbay Region Historical Society will be on display in [Maine Historical Society's](#) exhibit *Holding Up the Sky: Wabanaki People, Culture, History & Art*, April 12, 2019 through February 1, 2020.

Holding up the Sky explores Wabanaki philosophies of leadership and obligation relating to humans and non-humans by highlighting 13,000 years of Wabanaki residence in what is now known as Maine.

Wabanaki advisors guided the exhibition, interpreting 17th century colonial treaties, photographs, heritage items, and contemporary artworks—everything from ash baskets to haute couture fashion. Wabanaki voices provide context for the present-day relevance and repercussions of 400 years of shared histories between Wabanaki people and immigrants to their region.

For more information go to Maine Historical Society at www.mainehistory.org

Education Outreach



These third graders at Boothbay Region Elementary School are looking through stereoscopes as part of our outreach program. We are very pleased to be working with the third grades on this Boothbay region history project again this year! It is exciting to be sharing our resources with the school, and we have fun bringing objects into the classroom which the students can examine up close and in some cases handle themselves.



In addition to seeing the artifacts up close, the students receive an information packet with copies of maps and photographs from the Boothbay Region Historical Society collection, and have a craft project to work on. We make three classroom visits through the school year and at the end of the school year the students will visit Boothbay Region Historical Society museum.

Thank you to all our members, new and renewing, for your support!
We couldn't do it without you.

Celebrate our cultural heritage

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[or click here for our website.](#)

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*Come visit! We're open year-round,
Thursday through Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm.*

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