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Past Issues

A Window to the Past

Boothbay Region Historical Society

November 2023

Researching and preserving our history

Your stories will not be forgotten

You're invited!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2023 IOAM-2PM

The Boothbay Region Historical Society invites all to its annual holiday open house

Saturday, December 2 between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Please join us as we celebrate the holidays with vintage decorations, festive foods,

an art raffle, and more. Check out our holiday discounts on books, maps,

photographs, and other gifts. Catch up on society happenings and share your stories

At 10:30 a.m., Richard Plunkett, well-known antiques appraiser and owner of The

Wizard of Odds and Ends in Alna, will present a short program on the current world

of collecting. From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. guests may present up to three items for

appraisal for a donation to the society of \$5 for one or \$10 for three items.

We hope to see you then!

From Our Archives

With construction underway on Route 96 in 2023, we felt this article written by Barbara in 2019

would be a reminder of the many changes to this well-traveled local road over the years. Enjoy!

G. W. Boyd

This portion of the 1857 map shows the stretch of road, currently part of the Oak Lawn road, that detoured to avoid the big

hills. It looped up from beyond William McCobb's house and blacksmith shop (B.S.S.) to intersect the Beath and Back

Narrows roads, then descended the Bradley Road to near the turn to Bayville. The 1925-1926 shortcut across the Meadow

Brook and over the big hills ran from the entrance of the Oak Lawn road to the A. Lewis house area. S.H. was the old red

school; J. Lish (Leishman) became Gilly, then Bickford, Giles's house. Courtesy of Barbara Rumsey

Taming the Big Hills

By Barbara Rumsey, 2019, Boothbay Region Historical Society

Lobster Cove is a classically desirable location: a narrow shallow inlet draining a large swampy

marsh area. How large? A topographical map shows the area drained extending to the Kenniston

Hill area at Boothbay Center. Boothbay's wells were embedded in this huge sponge, as well as some

gravel pits, at least Larrabee's, Beath's, and Elbridge Giles'. The swampy waterway has

The Meadow Brook controlled part of Boothbay, at least whether it was under or above water. It

was attractive, not only because a marsh has fresh water and potential water power, but because a

marsh also provides a great environment for provisions. Drained, you have instant fields with no

towering trees to clear; left natural, waterfowl and animals frequent the area and berries and cattails

are in abundance, not to mention hay. Like a pig, it could all be used, and early settlers homed in on

it. Later the wetland became less of an advantage and more of an obstacle as residents no longer

The road to East Boothbay, Route 96, has to cross the Meadow Brook. It formerly did so by

descending the western hill partway, then veering north 1,500 feet past the spring operated in the

1900's by Dexter Hodgdon and later Rome Carbone, and on to Oak Lawn Cemetery. It then turned

east over an old stone culvert and followed a rise a few hundred feet to come out on the Back

Narrows Road not far from the intersection with the Beath Road—and then on to East Boothbay by

In the 1920's and 1930's the mechanical advantages that had come along were pushing towns to

straighten and improve roads in a big way. The little Oak Lawn detour didn't seem a hardship to me

but road-building zeal came to the big hills about 1925 or 1926. The goal was to straighten the road

and eliminate the Oak Lawn detour, go right down through the Meadow Brook, and lower the

Halfway up the eastern higher hill across from the south end of Back Narrows Road is Giles Road.

Gilly Giles and his son Bickford lived down Giles Road in the early- and mid-1900's. I remember

Red Giles telling me how Gilly Giles prevailed on the engineers when they came through with the

state road in the 1920's. The state wanted to put in one culvert under the road between the big hills

to drain the area, and it was done that way. But Gilly made sure a stipulation was inserted that

Lester Barter, born 1906, told me that Elbridge Giles, grandfather of the present Elbridge, built the

new road with his crew and his steam drill. Lester also remembered that Melville Bradley hauled

water—a pail in each hand—all day every day to keep the steam up for the steam drill. The water

came from a hole dug in the Meadow Brook. Mechanical advantages only went so far to ease the

workday. Wheelbarrows, pails, and shovels were still the way to go, though trucks were making

inroads. Backhoe-bucketloaders didn't get here until after World War II when Lincoln Giles bought

Even though Elbridge blasted the top of the eastern hill, its treacherous height was still fearful for

decades. Even the early 1960's winters, heading toward the Harbor, we'd pause at the top of the big

hills to gauge if we could make it down to the bottom and back up the other side. We'd study how

much snow was blown across down below or if there were too many vehicles stuck on or off the

road to risk joining them scattered at the bottom. Just as there was a horse team stationed on the

Edgecomb hill in the 1920's to haul cars out of snow banks, high school boys, like Philip Gregory

with his Scout, stationed themselves at times at the big hills in the 1960's to do likewise. Lengths of

chain and tire chains were still standard gear in the trunk. I have a length of nostalgic chain in my

In the later 1960's when the big hills were worked on again, Gilly's son, Bickford Giles, then owned

and knew the family land. He insisted on two culverts, and he got his way, though he had to go to

Augusta to remind them of their promise. He'd seen what could happen if that water was impeded.

When the 1960's work was done, the hills were then utterly tamed, the top of the eastern hill lopped

It's hard to call back the fear and determination the big hills used to engender for those pausing,

gripping the wheel, heading down, willing their cars to run the gauntlet of snow and cars at the

bottom, and getting up the other side. It was nice to have a rear engine VW bug for snow, though

horsepower of only 90 made any hill a challenge. Many a speeding ticket was forgiven once the

For more articles by Barbara Rumsey about the Boothbay region check our website:

www.boothbayhistorical.org/out-of-our-past

Region Historical Society

Founded in 1967

Call for support: 2023 ANNUAL FUND

Tomorrow, November 28, is #GivingTuesday and we hope you'll consider supporting

the historical society. Your contribution to our 2023 Annual Fund plays a pivotal role in

celebrating our community's history and igniting the curiosity of future generations

about our past. THANK YOU to those who have already generously invested in our

mission this year. Your philanthropy as the year draws to a close is essential—for our

shared history, our present community, and the promising future that awaits us.

Use the link below to donate via credit card through the form at the bottom-right of our home page. Alternatively,

you can mail or drop off your fully tax-deductible contribution check. Please find our address in the footer.

Donate Now!

STILL AVAILABLE! This beautiful 12"x18" watercolor, titled "Footbridge Boothbay",

by renowned local artist **Lonnie Sisson** is for sale through **Maine Art Collectors**, with

a portion of the proceeds to directly benefit the Boothbay Region Historical Society.

Purchase this locally significant interpretation of our beloved footbridge circa 1950

and contribute to preserving and celebrating our community's shared history. Check

SCANNING VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Historical Society's Digitization Project, which aims to eventually digitize all the

collections of the society, has progressed with such amazing rapidity that we have now

scanned over 10,000 photographs and nearly completed scanning the voluminous History

Files. When the latter are completed, we will begin scanning the Family History files in order

to make this popular set of records more accessible to those doing genealogy research. This

summer, we filled 13 of the 14 available volunteer scanning slots. Many of these, however,

were filled by seasonal visitors. With their departure for points south, we are in need of a new

crop of volunteers to scan both documents and photographs.

If you are interested, or think you *might* be interested, in becoming a scanning volunteer,

please contact trustee Merritt Blakeslee at mrb@blakeslee-law.com.

Boothbay Region Historical Society is a <u>museum open free</u>

of charge, year-round. We are an archive of more than

and more, serving researchers worldwide.

We provide a free third grade

history program (when fully

free

present special

staff and our dedicated trustees and volunteers.

staffed), a

series, and

exhibits.

15,000 images, news, documents, artifacts, genealogies,

<u>speaker</u>

We maintain the 1874 <u>historic house</u> which is our museum

and offices, and a museum store. We do it all with part-time

out the artwork at maineartcollectors.com/laurencesisson!

What can we do for you?

police understood the limitations—80 mph at the bottom of a hill became a crawl at the top.

way off and a tiered bridge of dirt installed over the Meadow Brook at the bottom.

another culvert could be added any time the owner thought it necessary to protect his pasture.

G.Dolla

.. Huff

traditionally been called the Meadow Brook.

extracted a living from the immediate land.

The Old Road

Bradley Road.

eastern higher hill.

1920's and 1960's Work

the first one.

trunk today.

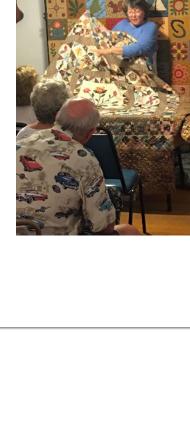
of life on the peninsula.

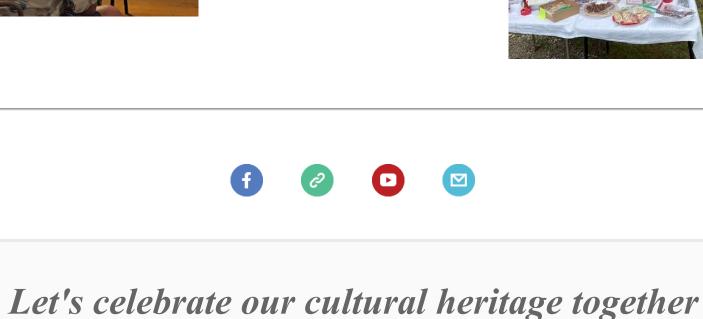
DAY OPEN HOUSE

RSS 3

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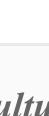
We work on special projects: funding a college scholarship for a Boothbay Region High School student, digitizing our collections, writing an exhibition catalog, and more.











We're open year-round, weather permitting: Thursday through Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm.

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more we can do!

Volunteers welcome!







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