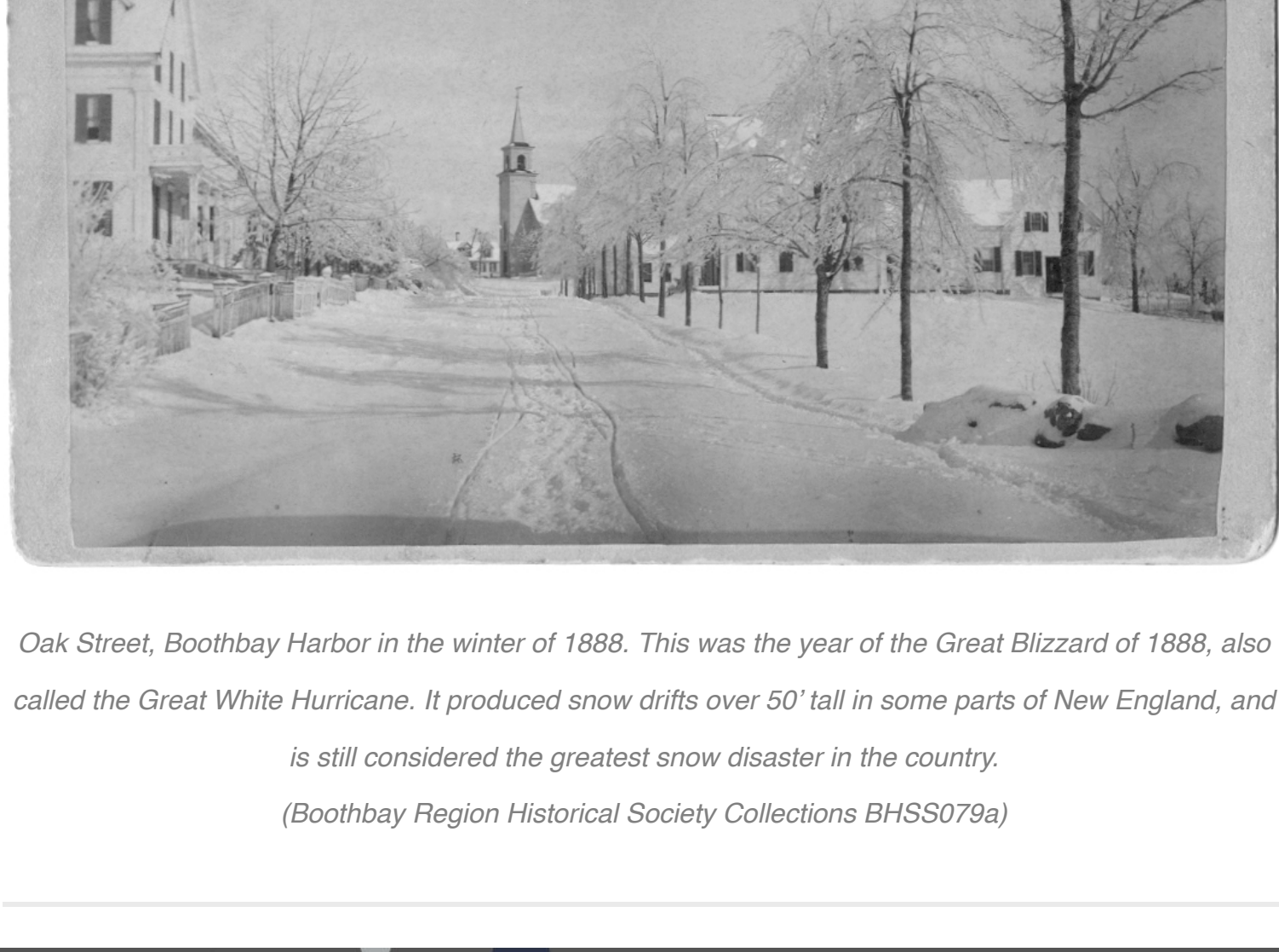


[View this email in your browser](#)

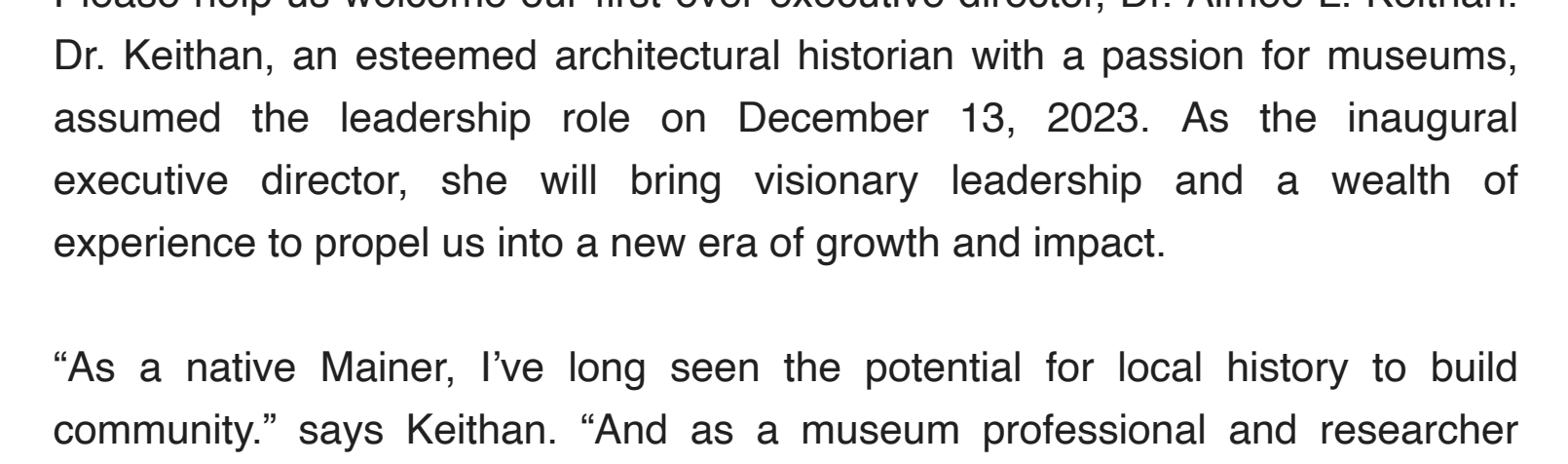
Researching and preserving our history, so your stories will not be forgotten.



[News & Events](#) | [Exhibits](#) | [Support](#) | [Visit Us](#)



Oak Street, Boothbay Harbor in the winter of 1888. This was the year of the Great Blizzard of 1888, also called the Great White Hurricane. It produced snow drifts over 50' tall in some parts of New England, and is still considered the greatest snow disaster in the country.  
(Boothbay Region Historical Society Collections BHSS079a)



Please help us welcome our first-ever executive director, Dr. Aimée L. Keithan.

Dr. Keithan, an esteemed architectural historian with a passion for museums, assumed the leadership role on December 13, 2023. As the inaugural executive director, she will bring visionary leadership and a wealth of experience to propel us into a new era of growth and impact.

"As a native Mainer, I've long seen the potential for local history to build community," says Keithan. "And as a museum professional and researcher focusing on revealing diverse and lesser-known histories, I strongly believe in proactively using history to shape the future. This aligns well with the society's mission and accomplishments. I'm delighted to join the team."

Our board recently undertook a thorough assessment of its building and collections. With the new executive director's leadership, we hope to begin strategic planning, prioritizing facility improvements, sharing newly digitized collections, and broadening our audience to better serve the public. Dr. Keithan will work closely with the Board of Trustees and serve as the face of the Society within the community and local schools.

"Aimée shares an appreciation of our old house museum and the collections in it. She has managed dozens of volunteers of all ages, run events and taught programs, serves on boards herself, and has a strong network of museum colleagues around Midcoast Maine," remarked board president Dana Wilson. "She's excited to help shore up the organization for the future. The Board of Trustees is thrilled to embrace this new chapter with her at the helm."

Stop by to say hello to Aimée during our open hours, Thursday-Saturday, 10am-2pm.



#### Do-it-Yourself Spirits in a Dry State

By Barbara Rumsey, originally published in the Boothbay Register, 2014

Image above: Corner of Oak Street and Townsend Ave in Boothbay Harbor. The building to the left on Oak Street housed Aunt Sadie Knight's rooming house on the upper floors.

#### Maine goes dry — 1851

Prohibition was nothing new to Mainers when it was instituted in 1918. Maine had been "dry" since 1851, when it became illegal to sell alcohol except for medicinal purposes. The law was variably enforced, more stringently after it became a Maine constitutional amendment in 1884. Though Maine was dry, there was no difficulty getting liquor. It could be ordered from Massachusetts and sent by steamer or rail. The only face-saving measure taken by the shipper was the container chosen — it usually arrived in gallon varnish tins.

Judge Cyrus Tupper of Boothbay Harbor often dealt out summary justice when townspeople were caught with liquor in the early 1900s. There was no need to go to the courthouse for justice; Cyrus's office was official enough.

A standard question to the red-handed was, "Where did you get it?" The invariable answer to protect the supplier was, "I found it under the sidewalk."

The wooden sidewalks had a bottle-sized space underneath. At times Cyrus would be awakened in the night by the night watchman because of someone's drunken disturbance of the peace. Cyrus would hear the particulars and instantly mete out justice in pajamas from his bedroom window.

#### Patent medicine substitutes

Besides sending away for liquor, there were remedies closer at hand. Johnson's Anodyne, a popular patent medicine, was 90 percent alcohol. People who looked with horror at liquor passing their lips cheerfully took their medicine.

Before 1900, many Americans regularly and unknowingly used now-illegal drugs. Most Americans had no clue that the vast array of heavily promoted soothing syrups and cures were loaded with alcohol, opiates or cocaine.

Public health officials estimated one in 300 Americans were opium addicts in 1900, and about one in 375 were cocaine addicts. Coca-Cola took its name from the product's cocaine, and in the 1890s, the official remedy endorsed by the Hay Fever Association was cocaine snuff. Also, vanilla and Jamaica ginger ("jaky") flavorings were about 45 percent alcohol and a handy intoxicant during the dry years.

#### Home brew

In terms of homemade remedies for dry states, there were three varieties of hard cider: red, white and blue. Red cider was a mixture of hard cider and home-made wine; white was hard cider alone; and blue was hard cider and home-made wine made from only blue grapes.

My sister's attempt to make hard cider at the prep school we attended in the early 1960s, by just letting a gallon of cider fester, resulted in its blowing its top in her dorm closet. A big clean-up!

One of the easiest routes to intoxication was homemade rum. Molasses came in barrels (perhaps ranging from 40 to 60 gallons) to local stores, and it was doled out to customers in bring-your-own jugs. It was the much-used sweetener for centuries, in coffee and tea (my father for instance), cereal like oatmeal (me), cookies, candy, molasses ginger, cakes, apple pan dowdy and so on.

People I knew born here in the aughts poured it on bread for a Sunday supper or dessert. Maybe some still do. Molasses was often turned into rum in homes, sometimes by distilling, which yielded a higher alcohol content; sometimes by letting it ferment in the barrel with ambient, wandering yeast; and sometimes by boiling with added yeast.

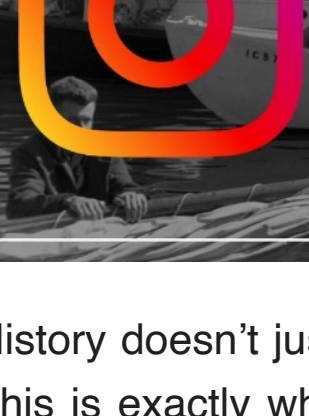
#### Molasses stories

Asa Tupper, born 1898, told me a little molasses story.

In the 1910s, Aunt Sadie Knight, who had a rooming house in the Harbor, sent young Asa to Will Hodgdon's grocery store to get a jug of molasses. As Asa watched Will, he saw a rat in the funnel between the jug and the barrel. Will said, "That won't do no harm," and continued filling.

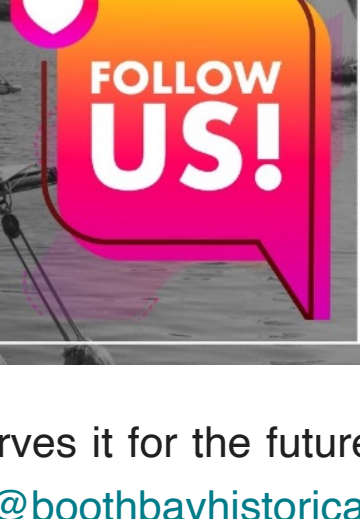
Cecil Pierce of Southport, born 1906, was one fellow I knew who liked molasses on bread. He told me a story about his days working at Pinkham's store on Southport in the 1920s. Mr. Graves had a still and made his own rum. He came to Pinkham's and saw a spoiled barrel of molasses with a layer of dead flies an inch thick. He declared it was just what he wanted and took it home to make rum.

Another time Graves acquired an intact barrel of molasses but couldn't figure out how to get into it. He asked Cecil for advice who eventually got hold of an oil pump, cleaned it, and installed it in the barrel. A few months later, Mr. Graves called him up, saying that the pump didn't work anymore. Cecil went down and found the barrel was empty, not faulty. Maybe Mr. Graves lost track of time.

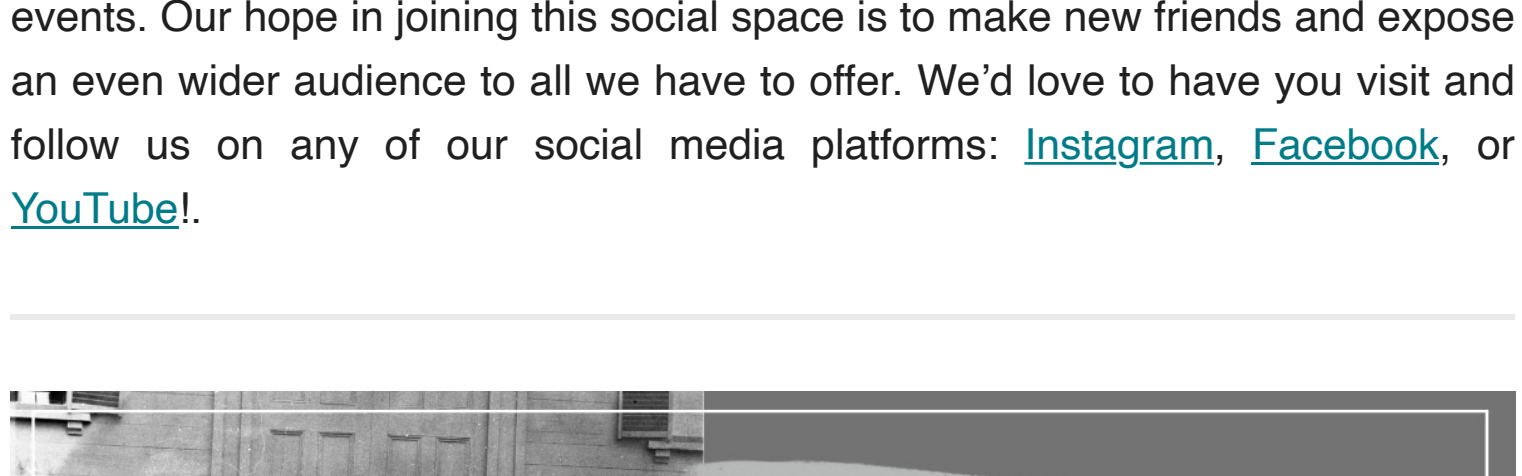


WE'RE ON

Instagram



History isn't just belong in the past. Sharing now preserves it for the future. This is exactly why we've started an Instagram account, [@boothbayhistorical](#). With over 2000 million users, Instagram was one of the top 4 social media platforms in 2023. As an image- and reel-forward platform, it's the perfect place to share historic images, artifacts, and photos of Boothbay Region Historical events. Our hope in joining this social space is to make new friends and expose an even wider audience to all we have to offer. We'd love to have you visit and follow us on any of our social media platforms: [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), or [YouTube](#)!



#### 2024 BOOTHBAY REGION HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP

We all know how extraordinary our Boothbay Region High School students are. As they make their way into the world of higher education we want to support them as they grow into equally extraordinary adults. For the last two years we've been able to do this by awarding \$1000 college scholarships.

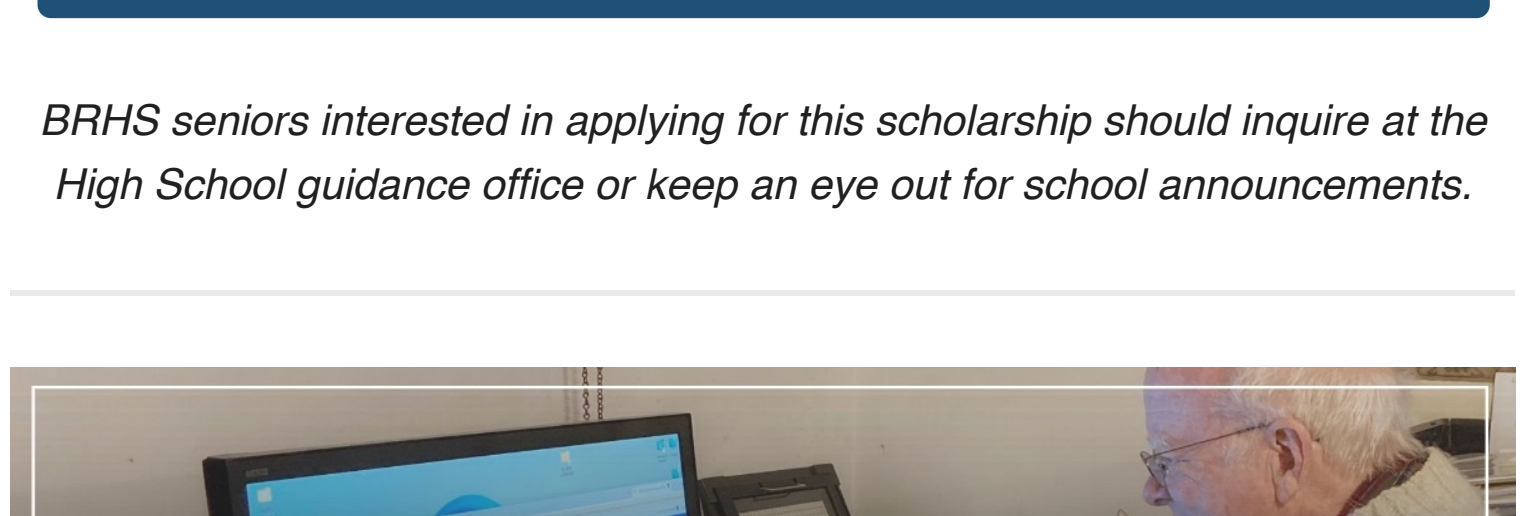
This wouldn't be possible without your help. If you're as proud of them as we are, we hope you'll consider donating to the Boothbay Region Historical Society college scholarship fund. You can do this by clicking on the link below and [donating through our website](#) or mailing a check to Boothbay Region Historical Society, P.O. Box 272, Boothbay Harbor, ME 04538. Simply include "scholarship" in the note section of your donation.

[DONATE TO THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND](#)

This is also the perfect opportunity for local businesses to make a substantial, direct impact on the futures of local students. If you'd like to be a scholarship fund business partner, please contact [Executive Director, Aimée Keithan](#) to talk about this opportunity.

#### SCHOLARSHIP BUSINESS PARTNER INFO

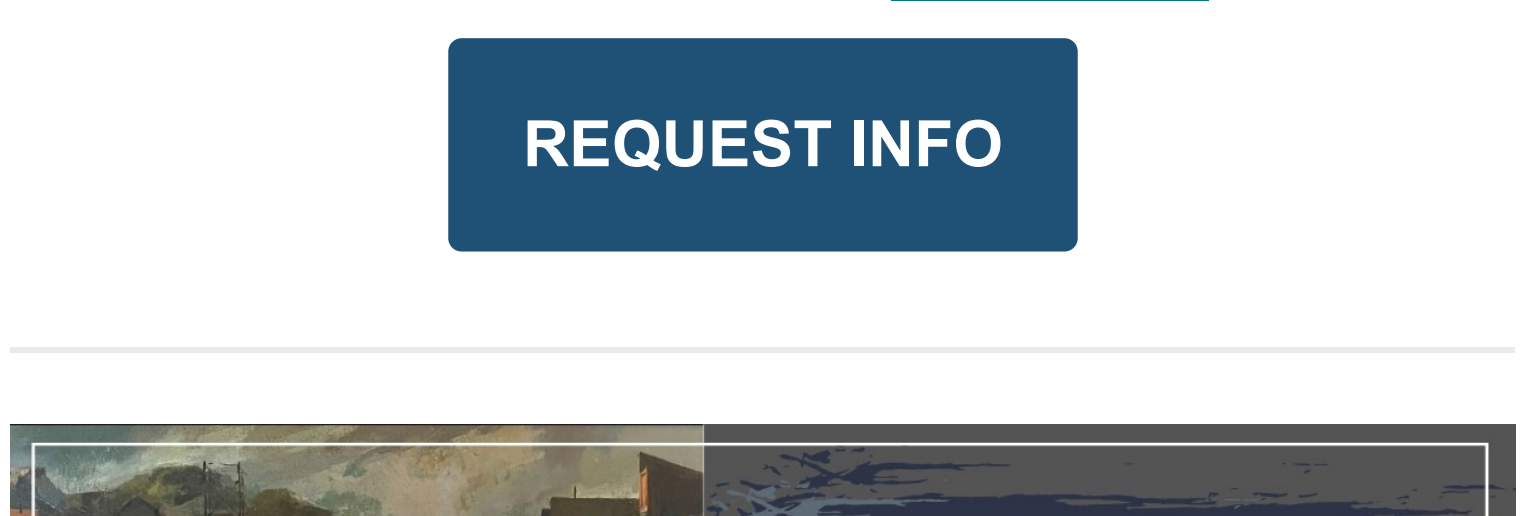
BRHS seniors interested in applying for this scholarship should inquire at the High School guidance office or keep an eye out for school announcements.



We are making good progress on our Digitization Project, but we could still use your help. We have now scanned over 10,000 photographs and are nearly finished digitizing our History Files. Next up: the Family History files! Our aim for this project is to make these invaluable resources more accessible for anyone wishing to research their family, local history, or any of the many topics our archives cover.

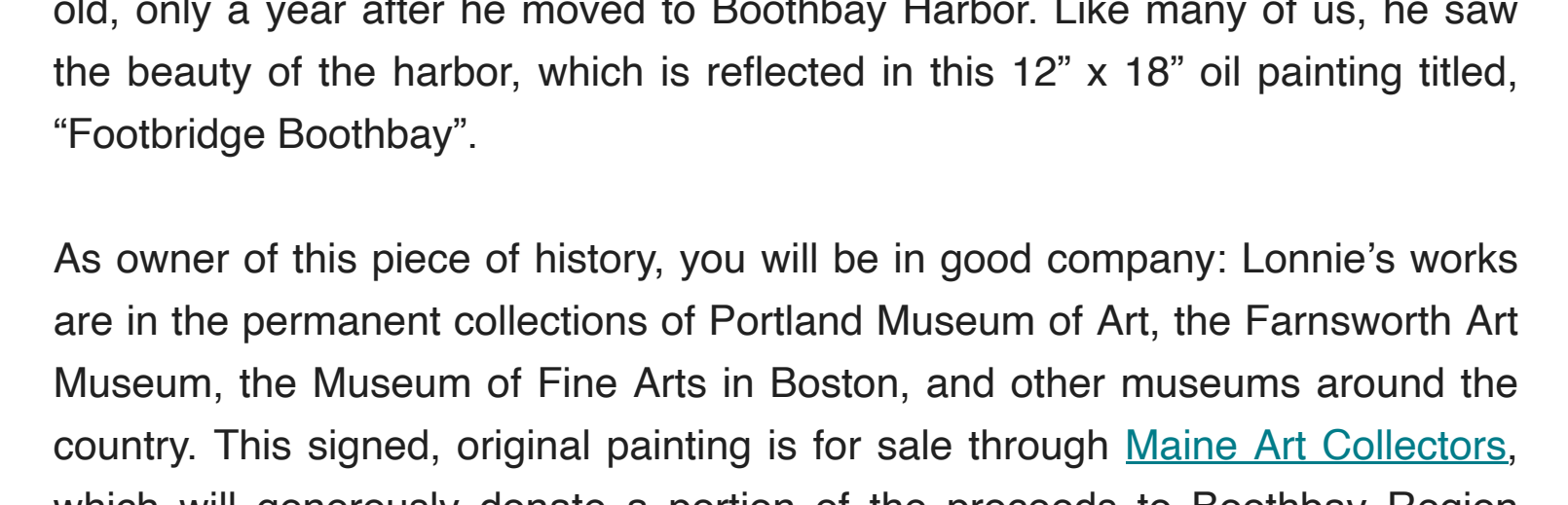
If you'd like more information about what being a scanning volunteer entails, click on the link below to email [Merritt Blakeslee](#).

[REQUEST INFO](#)



Do you recognize this local landmark? This is the Boothbay Harbor footbridge as it was circa 1950, painted by renowned local artist Lonnie Sisson (1928-2015). Astoundingly, this work was completed when Lonnie was just 22 years old, only a year after he moved to Boothbay Harbor. Like many of us, he saw the beauty of the harbor, which is reflected in this 12" x 18" oil painting titled, "Footbridge Boothbay".

As owner of this piece of history, you will be in good company: Lonnie's works are in the permanent collections of Portland Museum of Art, the Farnsworth Art Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and other museums around the country. This generously, original painting is for sale through [Maine Art Collectors](#), which will generously donate a portion of the proceeds to Boothbay Region Historical Society. Purchase this locally significant interpretation of our beloved footbridge and contribute to preserving and celebrating our community's shared history.



Open all year  
Thursday through Saturday  
10 a. m. to 2 p. m.

Local historian available:  
Wednesdays by appointment only  
Saturdays 10 a. m. – 2 p. m.

ADMISSION IS FREE

