

Newsletter

FALL 2024

Volume 37, Issue 1



HOLIDAY RAFFLE

Enter to win a signed Earle Barlow print of *The Good Voyage – The Eleanor F. Bartram and the Portland* and a copy of *Boothbay Region Historical Sketches, Volume III*, edited by Barbara Rumsey.

\$5 per entry or three for \$12

Enter at the museum, by phone, or mail.

Holiday Open House

Saturday, December 7, 2024 from 10am to 2pm
72 Oak Street, Boothbay Harbor

Happy Holidays! Please join us as we gather to say thank you to the community. The museum will be decorated with vintage cards, ornaments, and toys.

We'll have delicious treats, themed gift basket raffles, door prizes, and gift shop items on sale. Find the perfect book or map for the local history buff on your list.



Christmas Eve '59 Boothbay Harbor

While you're here, get to know us and tell us about you. Do your local family roots go way back? We'd love to hear your family stories. Are you new to the area? Tell us what drew you to the Boothbay Region.

All are welcome during this festive event. See you there!

A Message From Our President

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I'm delighted to announce that our search for a new Executive Director has been a success. Aimée Keithan brings both academic expertise and hands-on experience perfectly aligned with our mission. Her fresh perspective and commitment to historical preservation promise a bright future for our Society. The Board and I are confident in Aimée's leadership and look forward to the positive impact she will bring.

This past year has been marked by successful events: Dr. Libby Bischof's lecture on Maine's Romance Maps at the Harbor Theater revealed the cultural and historical significance of this unique cartographic style. We thank her and all attendees who helped make this event memorable. Our annual Cheese and Bake Sale was also a hit, a delicious variety of baked goods and locally produced cheese that sold out quickly. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and effort.

Looking ahead, we're planning new exhibits, expanding programs, and enhancing access to our archives and collections. We aim to strengthen community ties through collaborations with local organizations, offering events and initiatives that celebrate our region's rich history.

Thank you all for your continued support. Your time, donations, and enthusiasm keep us growing and thriving. Stay tuned for updates as we embark on another exciting year together! On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we wish you safety and security in what is sure to be an historic 2025.


Lucian Laurie



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In a culture that often prioritizes productivity, it's easy to get lost in the weeds of my To Do list. But as I reflect on my first year as executive director of the Boothbay Region Historical Society, I am amazed by the rich experiences I've had.

I've been warmly welcomed by our donors and members, and have enjoyed connecting with the community through events and partnerships. Our board, deeply passionate about preserving our history, has made my job of guiding the Society toward growth that much easier.

Answering research questions, chatting with our wonderful local historian Barbara Rumsey, and attending the Summer Speaker Series has deepened my understanding of the area's history—and sparked a thirst to learn even more.

A recent talk I gave at Mount Vernon, VA was a pleasant surprise; many people not only knew about Boothbay, but had fond memories of visiting. I'm grateful to be part of a place that touches so many lives, and to help ensure it continues to do so for generations to come.

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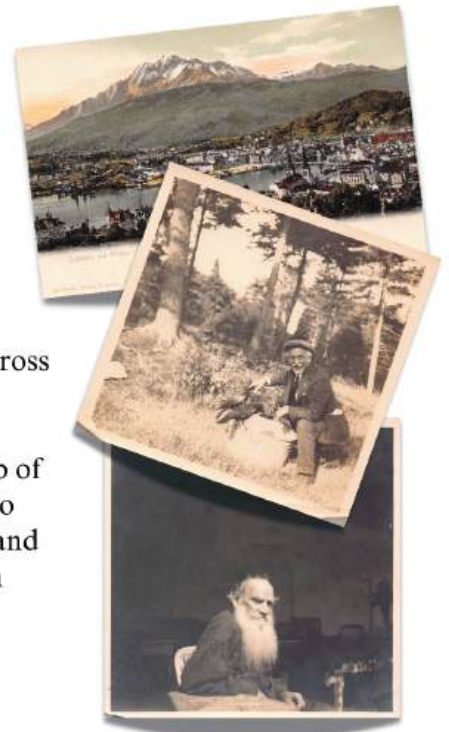
Collections News

Images from the life of Dr. Peter MacQueen

We recently received a unique donation: a postcard album and personal photos once belonging to Dr. Peter MacQueen (1863-1924), former pastor of the Congregational Church. While MacQueen is well-known locally, this collection reveals his international influence and wide-ranging adventures.

The postcards document his travels across Europe, illustrating his interest in ecclesiastical architecture and mountaineering, which led to his climb of Mount Kilimanjaro. The donation also includes photographs of Leo Tolstoy and his family, whom MacQueen visited in Russia.

Despite his international fame, MacQueen's personal snapshots of feeding crows at his East Boothbay home highlight his deep connection to the local community. We're grateful to be the newest stewards of these cherished items, which offer valuable insight into a life rich with adventure, service, and community.



Top-bottom: Lucerne, Switzerland postcard (2024.07.20); Peter MacQueen with tame crows (2024.07.11); Leo Tolstoy, photo by Peter MacQueen (2024.07.18)

Current Exhibits

Open Thursday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.



A Look Back: 150 Years of Life in the Boothbay Region showcases local history through artifacts, photos, and stories. The exhibit highlights the Reed family, who built the museum, and features the Monday Club Papers. Explore the region's industries—ice harvesting, Boneworks, tide mills, and lobstering—and view souvenir china reflecting Boothbay's tourist trade. Be sure to check out the "Now & Then" board, comparing historic buildings to their modern counterparts!



The Rice Brothers Collection exhibit celebrates the legacy of the Rice Brothers Shipyard. It features photographs, archival records, and detailed ship models showcasing the shipyard's history.



Cutting ice and raking muck at West Harbor Pond with Dan McCobb's oxen. BHP3044

The Knickerbocker Ice Company and the early days of the natural ice industry on the lower Boothbay Peninsula

Merritt Blakeslee, Trustee

The natural ice business, which had existed in various embryonic forms elsewhere in Maine since 1826, did not begin operations on an industrial scale in the Boothbay region until the summer of 1876, when the Knickerbocker Ice Company from Philadelphia leased Campbell and Reed's Ponds (now Knickerbocker and Little Knickerbocker Lakes) to cut ice. The company promptly hired between 100 and 125 men, whom it set to building wharves, elevators, and icehouses. In these heady days, it was paying out \$1,000 a week in wages, "causing quite a commotion in this hitherto quiet part of our town" and "help[ing] very much to supplement a poor summer's fishing." The Register excitedly proclaimed that when the two- or three-week cutting season of 1877 arrived, the company expected to employ 150 hands.

The Maine natural ice industry emerged suddenly upon the scene

and, like other unanticipated arrivals – tourism, lobstering, windfarms – injected new wealth into the Maine economy during the arc of its short existence. But natural ice was, from the very beginning, a contingent, overflow industry in Maine, one subject to the vagaries not only of the mercurial law of supply and demand but of that most uncertain of all variables, the weather. Its product was marketable only when the harvest failed in the established ice-producing centers of the Eastern United States, Philadelphia's Schuylkill River, New York's upper Hudson River, and Boston's Fresh Pond in Cambridge, located on the doorstep of their respective primary markets. So, like Great Plains wheat farmers anxiously scanning the skies for rain as the growing season wears on towards harvest, the Maine communities that stood to profit from a good ice season began in December to attend closely to the weather reports from

the South and West – their term for the Eastern Seaboard below the state line – for signs of unseasonable warmth.

In early January 1877, less than a month after its enthusiastic start-up and confident infusion of capital and, "after scraping the ice on Reed's Pond for two or three snows," the Knickerbocker Ice Company abruptly ceased operations for the season "owing to the severe cold weather at the west and South, and prospect of gathering a sufficient quantity of the cooling material on the Hudson and Schuylkill Rivers." Nevertheless, it declared that it stood poised and ready to "cut and load several vessels a day . . . [s]hould the January thaw come soon" in the South.

In a good season, a Maine ice operation with access to an ice-free port – like Knickerbocker's dock on

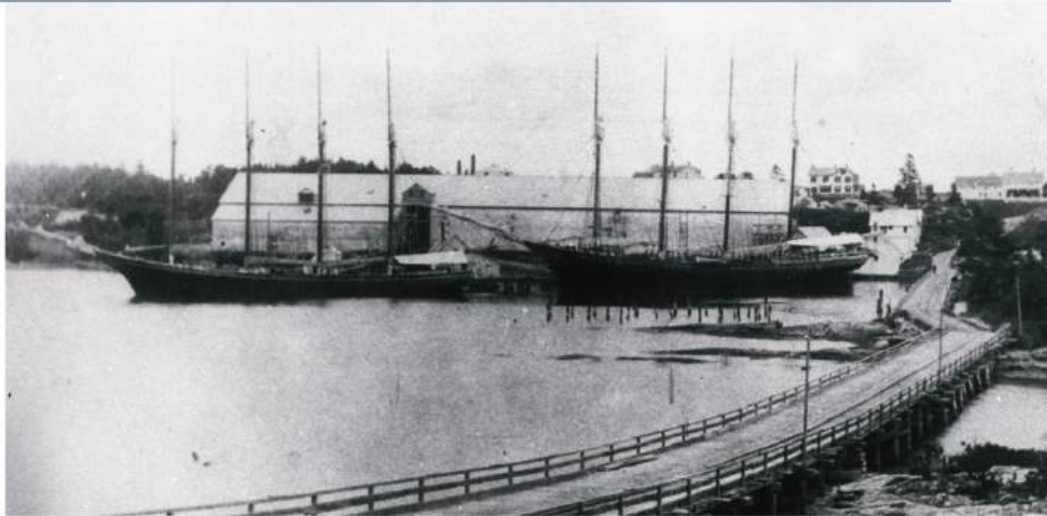
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“Knickerbocker”

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Back River – shipped only a portion of its ice as it was cut. The chief objective of the large concerns was to use the cutting season to fill their ice houses so that they could supply the southern markets throughout the spring and summer months. But by mid-February 1877, as winter lingered down south, even that option was foreclosed; and the Boothbay ice season came to a premature end with the local ice operations “having laid in what they consider sufficient for home use” but nothing more. “Nobody thinks of selling ice next summer. Ice is to[o] plenty [i.e., plentiful] at present.”

Thus, as the 1878 season drew near, anxiety mingled with the hope that a boom year would follow the bust year of 1877. In late November, the Knickerbocker Ice Company, having optimistically laid the sills for new icehouses during the summer, “slacked up operations” while waiting to see whether “the winter at the South is a mild one.” And so it proved to be. In early January, an officer of the Knickerbocker Ice Company arrived in Boothbay direct from its headquarters in Philadelphia with the welcome report that there had been “just one skim of ice on the Schuylkill as yet. And the weather very warm and pleasant when he left.” At this news, the company readied the steam engines that would raise the ice from the Reed and Campbell Ponds into the ice houses or over the ridge to the loading docks on Back River and waited for “the man . . . with auger and gage” to announce that the ice was thick enough to harvest.



Schooners waiting to load at the Knickerbocker Ice Company's ice house on Back River next to the Knickerbocker bridge. BWF003

In the final weeks of December and the first week of January, no snow fell, allowing the ice to thicken without the necessity of scraping and, incidentally, making for excellent skating. When snow finally fell in the second week of January, the ice crews swarmed to clear it away; and when ice cutting commenced, sightseers could watch “the ice travel up the big elevator and slide down hill into the vessel at the wharf [on Back River], or into the great houses the company have erected in which to store the congealed water until vessels can be obtained to ship it to Philadelphia.”

The 1878 ice season was indeed a boom year for the nascent ice trade on the lower Boothbay Peninsula. In mid-February, the Register trumpeted “Ice is King in Boothbay

now” and breathlessly proclaimed, “Everyone you meet now talks ice. . . Ice is the order of the day, and night also. Ice is just now distributing more money in Boothbay than all other kinds of business combined.”

This unbridled enthusiasm was contagious, and on February 9 a group of local citizens met at Capt. J. H. Pinkham’s store at West Harbor and determined to create “an enterprise of West Harbor that would give employment to a large number of men that has little to do in the winter season,” a decision that led within two years to the construction of a dam across the mouth of Campbell’s Cove, creating another ice pond, this one to be called eventually West Harbor Pond.

CALL FOR RESEARCH ARTICLES

Have a history topic you'd like to share? Contact Executive Director Aimee Keithan at alkeithan@boothbayhistorical.org to submit an article (600-800 words) for possible inclusion in our newsletter. We encourage creative topics and lesser-explored histories.

Goodbye to Good Friends

Volunteers who truly made a difference



Doreen Crawford Dun, known as “Dodo,” passed away on June 18, 2024, after a six-year battle with ovarian cancer. A devoted member of the Boothbay Region Historical Society, she served as trustee, Secretary, Vice President, and President, leaving a lasting legacy. Born to Scottish immigrants in Staten Island, Doreen’s life was defined by her love of learning, community, and travel. She was a graduate of Wellesley College and Georgetown University, and worked as a consultant for the Ford Foundation. A beloved mother and grandmother, Doreen cherished her family and friends, always advocating for education, connection, and service. Her kindness, wisdom, and leadership continue to resonate through the countless lives she enriched and the lasting impact she made on all who knew her.



Robert B. Rice, 85, passed away on August 2, 2024. A Vietnam War veteran, Robert served in the U.S. Army for 21 years, earning multiple honors, including the Meritorious Service Medal. After retiring from the military, he worked as a maintenance supervisor and house builder. He was a dedicated member of the Boothbay Region Historical Society, serving as Vice President and President in the 1970s and earning Volunteer of the Year in 2005. His contributions to preserving local history were invaluable. A skilled model maker, Robert’s ships, planes, and cars were displayed in museums. He was married to June E. Rowe for 64 years and is survived by their daughter, grandsons, and great-granddaughter. His legacy of service, craftsmanship, and community dedication will be remembered by all who knew him.

Help Us Make History

Join our community of dedicated volunteers

Last year, the historical society took a big step forward, with the completion of a grant-funded Collections Assessment for Preservation (CAP) Report, which provided next steps to maintain and improve our significant historic collections and the Elizabeth Freeman Reed House. Since then, we’ve been hard at work on new projects, and we couldn’t do it

without the generous time and talents of volunteers. We’re now offering an even wider variety of volunteer opportunities so you can spend time doing something you truly love.

No prior experience is necessary—we’ll provide the training. Or if you have a particular skill or talent, chat with us and we can design a project just for you!

If you’d like to learn more, email info@boothbayhistorical.org, call us at (207) 633.0820, or stop by the museum during open hours.



L-R: Volunteers conserve and store a painting; Boothbay in Bloom summer event; working in the digital database; Gardens Aglow Community Night.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Digitizing historic documents and photos
- Entering items into our digital collections database
- Historic artifact conservation and care
- Collections inventory
- Small carpentry and building projects
- Special events
- Greeting visitors
- Answering research questions
- And more!



Boothbay Region Historical Society
P.O. Box 272, 72 Oak Street
Boothbay Harbor, ME 04538

Open Year Round

Thursday through Saturday
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Contact

(207) 633.0820
info@boothbayhistorical.org
boothbayhistorical.org

Follow Us



*Boothbay Region Historical Society is
a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization*

Please advise us of any address, phone, or email changes

**BOOTHBAY REGION
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

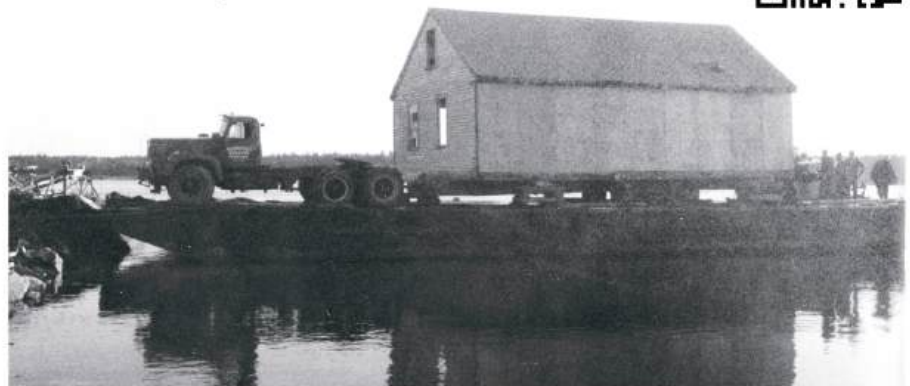
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**Help us move towards our
Annual Fund Goal**

Donate Today



Did you know that nearly 40% of our annual income comes from donations? Your contribution truly makes a difference. If you haven't made an Annual Fund donation this year, won't you consider giving today? We make it easy with many ways to give!

Visit 72 Oak St, Thursday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Mail a check to P.O. Box 272
Boothbay Harbor, ME 04538

Phone (207) 633.0820

Online at boothbayhistorical.org
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