



BOOTHBAY REGION
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

MARCH 2024

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

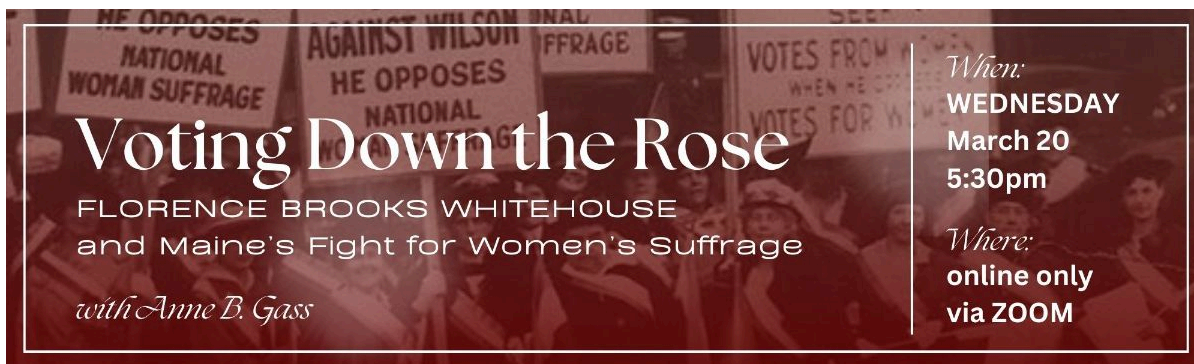


[News & Events](#) | [Exhibits](#) | [Support](#) | [Visit Us](#)



Construction of Boothbay Region High School in March 1955.

(Boothbay Region Historical Society Collections BHS087-01 B. Barter Collection)



Join us to celebrate Women's History Month with an online talk entitled, ***"Voting Down the Rose: Florence Brooks Whitehouse and Maine's Fight for Woman Suffrage,"*** with Anne B. Gass, on Wednesday, **March 20 at 5:30pm via ZOOM.**

The Boothbay region's involvement with the women's suffrage movement runs deep. Boothbay Region Historical Society's collections even include a 1917 petition for women's suffrage, signed by hundreds of local women. Plus, our museum was previously the home of Elizabeth Reed, who was very active in the movement. There is no doubt she was inspired by the work of her contemporary, Florence Brooks Whitehouse, who summered on Squirrel Island.

From 1914-1920 Florence led Maine's effort to win voting rights for women, battling conservative views of women's roles and the political intrigues that sought to keep them in the home and out of the voting booth.

Join Maine Author [Anne B. Gass](#) on Zoom as she shares the inspiring story of her great-grandmother. The talk is based on her book, [Voting Down the Rose: Florence Brooks Whitehouse and Maine's Fight for Woman Suffrage](#), and is accompanied by slides of historic photos.

This is a virtual presentation only. [Pre-registration is required](#) to access the Zoom link. A link to the recording will also be sent after the event to those who register.

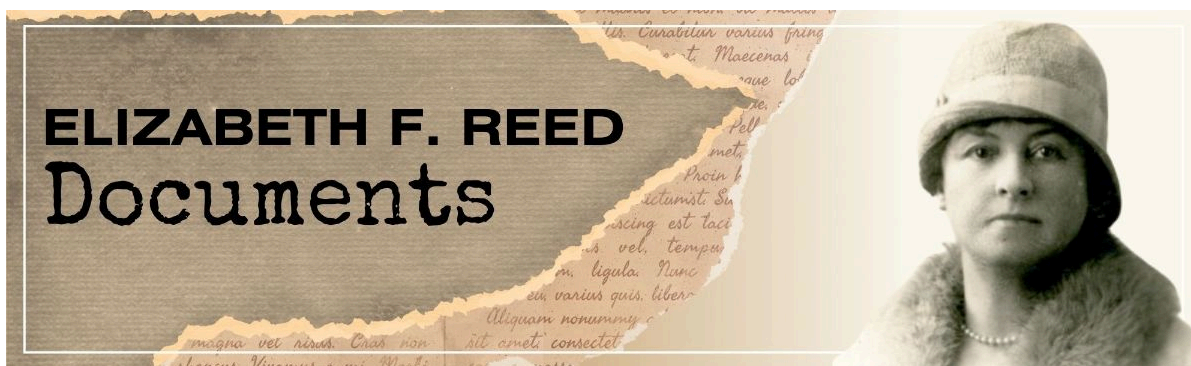
This is a FREE event, but donations are greatly appreciated.

REGISTER HERE



We've got a year of informative, interesting, and entertaining events for you lined up this year. Next up after our March Zoom program is the **Boothbay Region Historical Society Annual Meeting** with a presentation by newly appointed Executive Director, Aimee Keithan. This will take place on Tuesday, May 21 at 72 Oak St., Boothbay Harbor, Maine.

We are also hard at work lining up presenters for our popular **Summer Speaker Series**, which will be held in July, August, and September this year. Sprinkled in throughout the summer season we'll also have a couple of fundraisers and entirely new events, all aimed at sharing our rich local history in fascinating ways. Check our [EVENTS CALENDAR](#) page to stay on top of what's coming up!



Elizabeth F. Reed & Women's Suffrage

Written by Julia O'Brien-Merrill, Boothbay Historical Trustee

Image above: Elizabeth F. Reed, Boothbay Region Historical Society BHGI023d

One hundred and fifty years have passed since 1874, the year of Elizabeth Freeman Reed's birth. During the Historical Society's recent [Collections Assessment for Preservation](#) (CAP), I had the opportunity, as a new trustee, to

spend time getting more familiar with the Museum. I was drawn to a mahogany desk on the front wall of Room One when someone mentioned that it contained records from Elizabeth Freeman Reed and her involvement in the Monday Club. After opening desk drawers and peeking in cubbies, I realized these primary sources were a true historical treasure chest and wondered if there would be a time when I could dig in.

I thought Aimee Keithan, our new Executive Director, had read my mind when she reached out to me wondering if I might be interested in producing a series of research 'bites' on the Monday Club and Bess Reed. I agreed and commenced combing through a couple of documents, one of which was three pages in Bess Reed's cursive handwriting titled *To the Voters of Boothbay Harbor*.

An adjacent multi-paged printed brochure titled *The Case Against Woman Suffrage* urged a NO vote to the Men of Maine. "The Most Important Question On the ballot at the Special Election, September 10, 1917—Shall the Constitution be amended as proposed by a resolution of the Legislature granting suffrage to women upon equal terms with men?"

Reed developed her argument for a YES vote by quoting from the Town Report of 1917, noting that the women of Boothbay Harbor had paid more than \$7250.00 in taxes without having any voice in town government. She questioned, "Do you consider this fair? In a democracy the government rests upon the just consent of the governed. Is this a government 'of the people, by the people, and for the people' when one half of the town have no voice in town affairs and when more than 240 women taxpayers here have no direct representation in town, state, and national elections although they are compelled to pay taxes to support the town, the state, and national government?" Reed's closing paragraph reads, "By voting yes upon the proposed Women Suffrage Amendment to the Constitution of Maine on September 10 you will eliminate this great injustice to your fellow townswomen who have always stood by you loyally in all matters of public interest."

Whether this document was a speech, or a letter placed in the newspaper, it gives credence to Bess Reed as one of many suffragists who raised her voice advocating for a woman's right to vote. Before the 19th Amendment was ratified on August 18, 1920, Maine was one of thirty states holding ballot measures to adopt women's suffrage. Unfortunately, Maine's 1917 referendum question failed by a vote of 38,838 to 20,604. But Bess Reed and the other women of

the Boothbay region continued to fight on. This is just one example of how seemingly quiet voices in history can make a big impact on society.



Over the last couple of months, the Historical Society has hosted Boothbay Region High School's STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) group. Students initially visited for an orientation to the museum, where they became familiar with the types of resources available and had a discussion of how different resources can be used in research. This visit was in preparation for history-related projects that will culminate in virtual and physical exhibits. It was wonderful to see such a variety of interests and to see all the students so engaged with the museum.

Once they honed their project ideas, they returned to conduct their research. Using primary sources like a lobsterman's expense book, secondary sources from our History Files, and even artifacts such as the model of a minesweeper, they explored topics ranging from Indigenous history to Aquaculture. We're excited to see how it all comes together!

SUPPORT OUR MISSION



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