

Spring 2023

The Society Pages:

News about the people and projects of
the Mount Desert Island Historical Society

From the Executive Director, Raney Bench

Our programs, events, publications and exhibits bring Island history to the public, but there is always more going on behind the scenes at the Historical Society. Many of you know that the Society cares for two historic campuses for a total of three buildings and the Somesville bridge. The Somesville campus is one of the most photographed locations in the state, yet few realize it is managed and cared for by the Historical Society. The one-room schoolhouse on Rt. 3 in the historic village of Sound is less visited than the Somesville campus, but continues its role in island education through our school programs, and provides a secure location for our historic collections and access to scholars. Old buildings require lots of maintenance, so don't be surprised when you see some work taking place at both campuses this spring and summer.

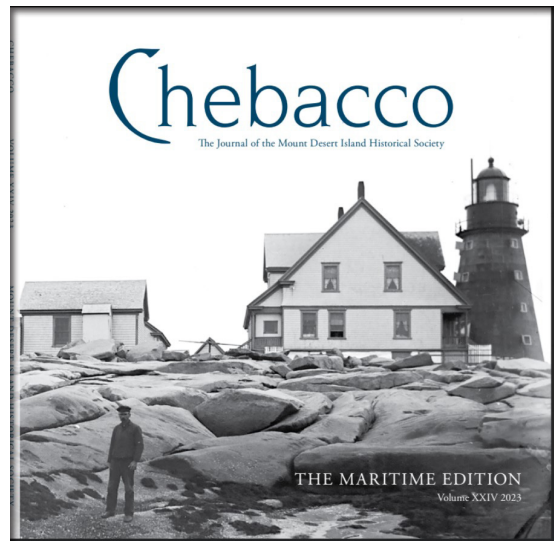
The Somesville bridge and the main museum building will get a fresh coat of paint this spring. Please be patient with

Chebacco: The Maritime Edition

Chebacco XXIV: The Maritime Edition, arriving in member's mailboxes in late April, sets out to explore the region's long and special relationship with the sea, and is co-edited by Willie Granston of the Great Harbor Maritime Museum.

The introduction captures some of the flavor of this unique edition: "For the first time in its history, this journal is a collaborative effort between two institutions: The Mount Desert Island Historical Society and The Great Harbor Maritime Museum. Like all history projects, this has been challenging, exciting, unexpected, but the outcome has been rewarding. In this issue of *Chebacco* we rely on networks of individuals and institutions, and call attention to new stories. The resulting articles bring together resources from disparate collections and connect new pieces in the giant puzzle of this Island's rich past. Local history is being told in new ways, and what could be more exhilarating?"

us as the campus won't be as photogenic while the work is taking place, but the resulting facelift will improve the overall experience and will be well worth it. We are having the structure of the bridge evaluated to ensure it remains safe for all visitors, year-round. At the schoolhouse, the historic chimney is starting to fall apart, so we will be hiring a mason to rebuild the chimney and repair some interior water damage to the classroom. Our "historic" heating system is also in need of replacement, and we are planning a transition to more energy efficient, environmentally friendly alternatives. Once we have a proposal, we will be writing grants to fund this upgrade. If you would like to support these projects, please make a donation today!



Readers will explore Frenchman Bay while it was under an embargo ordered by Thomas Jefferson, see Mount Desert Rock in 1906 through the camera lens of the lighthouse keeper's wife, and become lost in the coastal paintings of Harrison Bird Brown.

Co-editors Raney Bench and Willie Granston will appear on the final episode of *Chebacco* Chats this spring, airing Thursday, April 27 at 4:30pm, to talk about the collaborative process and highlights from their experience.

History Matters

There are a number of difficult conversations taking place among island communities right now. Questions about growth, the impacts of aquafarms, tourism, climate change, and development, challenges in housing, short-term rentals, and how to fund our schools and aging public works - all of this can feel overwhelming at times. Of course, the Historical Society cannot provide the answers to these questions, but we do provide context. Because we believe that history matters, our team works to connect our community to resources, images, documents, and insights, sharing the past to inform the present.

Each edition of *Chebacco* includes at least one article focused on the historic context for contemporary issues. In 2022, Natalie Springuel wrote an article about the history of net pen farming in Frenchman Bay, providing facts and stories about previous attempts, successes and failures as a

way to better understand the debate about future fin fish farms. *Landscape of Change* is a partnership among seven island non-profits focused on measuring the scope, scale, and speed of climate change. And, our free public programs foster conversations about the value of community and how history can strengthen our sense of place.

It is a common claim that our ancestors lived in simpler times, but my work with history challenges that assumption. Islanders from the original Wabanaki to those living here today have struggled with food security, housing and land access, economic security, social and racial justice, and the push and pull of who among us has a right to define the future. The Historical Society has a number of programs, articles, and opportunities for community engagement with history focused on these relevant issues, so make sure to check our calendar of events to stay involved.

Upcoming Programs & Events

April 24: 6:00pm on Zoom: Book Club featuring *God's Pocket* by Rachel Field, welcoming special guest Robin Clifford Wood, author of *The Field House*

April 27 at 4:30pm on Zoom: *Chebacco* Chats features Raney Bench and Willie Granston to talk about the collaborative process of putting together the Maritime Edition of *Chebacco*.

May 8 at 5:00pm online: Science Cafe at MDI Biological Laboratory: How will rising seas affect the places we care about? Join Raney Bench, Catherine Schmitt of Schoodic Institute, and artist Jennifer Booher as they discuss an ongoing project to document sea level rise around Mount Desert Island. Visit mdibiolab.org to register.

May 17 at 5:30pm, in-person: History Happy Hour - We will be playing "Two Truths and a Lie" at the Rusticator Lounge at the Bayview Hotel, Bar Harbor.

June 17 at 10:00am: Somesville Museum and Gardens opens for the season. This is the last year to view the two exhibits on campus: *Summers of Science & Wonder*, and *Landscape of Change*.

June 23 at 6:00pm, in-person or Zoom: "Harrison Bird Brown in Fact and Fiction" with Jefferson Navicky and Earle Shettleworth at Northeast Harbor Public Library.

July 3 at 6:00pm, in-person or Zoom: "Beyond Norwood's Cove: Naval Operations around Mount Desert Island in the War of 1812" with Joshua M. Smith at Northeast Harbor Library.

August 2 at 5:00pm in-person: Annual Meeting and History Happy Hour at the Neighborhood House

August 14 at 6:00pm in-person or Zoom: Libby Bischof program on Mount Desert Rock photographs, Northeast Harbor Library.

August 24 at 6:00pm in-person or Zoom: Tim Garrity and Jaylene Roths program about the *Berwind* mutiny, Northeast Harbor Library.

From the Collections - by Patrick Callaway, Collections Coordinator

The return of 40 degree temperatures and the declining snowpack in the schoolhouse yard can only mean one thing: the return of spring, and soon the return of millions of visitors here on Mount Desert Island. Tourism has long been a seasonal staple of the island economy, and with that comes an interesting comparison to laborers past and present.

In this edition of "From the Collections," we find an undated newspaper article by Marjorie Standish recounting her experiences working at the Kimball House in the summer of 1928. Standish was a sophomore at the University of Maine-Farmington, and she was at Kimballs "for the learning" after her course in home economics. She lamented the high costs of transportation on the island, as her income depended on tips. The expectations for her job performance reflected the culture of the times: "all needed to be at perfection." Part of perfection was the dress of white aprons over black uniforms, and the waitresses were lined up for inspection by the head waiter

who "paced back and forth before us, hands behind his back, criticizing, approving, checking stocking seams..." Despite the difficulties, Standish remarked that she was grateful for her experience as there was much to learn that would help her in her formal studies.

Standish wrote that many of the guests at Kimballs stayed for the summer and over time she came to know them and they became interested in the staff. Contrast this with 2023, where the majority of visitors stay for only a few days. Certainly the nature of tourism has changed over the past 100 years, but what this means for worker expectations and their experiences with summer visitors is less clear. How does this impact our sense of community if seasonal workers and visitors don't have the time to build stronger connections to MDI? Certainly her experiences at Kimballs made a life-long impression on Standish.

Also skip the onion bread recipe from this article. It is inedible.

Cooking Down East
By MARJORIE STANDISH

Summer Hotel Work Good Experience For Girls

"All out for B-a-a-a-r Harbor", the conductor called and Bar Harbor we were almost at! Dot Frost and I had been traveling most of the day by train from Brunswick. Having arrived at Mt. Desert Ferry, we still had the ferry trip across the bay to Bar Harbor.

That in itself was interesting, yet it was the beauty of the early summer evening we have never forgotten. It was the Friday night before the Fourth of July. The year was 1928, the summer between my freshman and sophomore years at Farmington.

The setting sun, with the mountains in the background on this calm and beautiful evening was a sight to remember. It was when we arrived at Bar Harbor that we were in for a bit of a shock. We were going to the Kimball House at Northeast Harbor to wait on tables. What we were not too clear about was the fact that once having arrived at Bar Harbor, we had no way of getting to Northeast, except by taxi. It cost us eight dollars and that was what turned out to be the shocking part. We did not have too much more than that between us, since we were relying on tips as our source of income. We survived this financial ordeal, for we were busy "learning the ropes" and didn't venture too far away from the hotel those first few weeks.

I HAVE ALWAYS been grateful to the Kimballs for all I learned about food that summer. This was summer hotel living at its finest. Having had a freshman year of college Home Economics, I was eager to learn more. It was there for the learning.

To begin with, if you were inexperienced, you "went to school" for a week, learning the ropes from the experienced waitresses. They wrote orders and we went to the pantry, to return with proper empty dishes to set before them, for approval.

As you improved, you were promoted and when finally I arrived with Station No. 5, I was happy and ready to actually wait upon guests. Usually, your guests stayed for the summer, you grew to know them, their sons and daughters and in turn, they became interested in you.

MONDAY NIGHT was formal dinner party night and this was a food education in itself. The well-decorated tables, the glance of approval by the hostess of each dinner party table, before the guests arrived, made us all aware that all needed to be at perfection.

Every night the headwaiter lined us up for inspection, before opening the dining room doors. We stood in a wide semi-circle, as he paced back and forth before us, hands behind his back, criticizing, approving, checking stocking seams, white aprons over the black uniforms. Then, his parting shot, always, as he opened the doors was, "And watch them salts and peppers!"

Foodwise, it was a fascinating summer. I learned about clam bouillon a la Uncle Sam, a clear hot clam bouillon, served with a dab of whipped cream and so good for a first course. Never will I forget the fish courses, served with such care. Nor the cheese croquettes, which were new to me and perfectly delicious.

I remember saying to the entree cook as I looked at them one time, "Don't they look wonderful." His answer was that a good waitress never goes hungry. But, a "checker" marked off every item on your tray against your written order as you left for the dining room. Yes, there was much to learn at the Kimball House.

TODAY we will talk about an idea which perhaps will be new to you in anticipation of your summer bazaars for church, club or hospital. This idea comes to us from Mrs. Guy G. Smith of Needham, Mass. The Smiths lived for a number of years in Maine and still see the Portland Sunday Telegram. Many of you use Mrs. Smith's buttermilk biscuit recipe which has appeared in this column.

This is a recipe for onion bread. The recipe appears in the Friendly Society cookbook from the Congregational Church in Needham. At fair time, they "bag this onion bread in clear, plastic bags and sell rafts of it." Perhaps it will be an idea for your own fair.

Melt 1 stick margarine and 1 stick butter together. (This will be a ¼ pounds of each.) To this add 1 small onion, ground or grated. Set this aside until the mixture becomes creamy. Then, spread this on the triangles.

Place the triangles on cookie sheets and bake at 250 degrees for 1 hour or until they are brown. Store in a tin can.

These are delicious served with cool, summer drinks, salads or soups.

FROM Evelyn Ware of Skowhegan comes another recipe for something you can do with a loaf of unsliced bread, which will be, as she says, "Luscious served with fruit salad and equally good with fried chicken."

Cheese Party Cubes

Trim crusts from 1 loaf unsliced bread. Cut into 1-inch cubes.

MELT:
1 3-ounce package cream cheese
¼ pound sharp cheese
½ cup butter in top double boiler, over boiling water. Remove from heat. Fold in 2 beaten egg whites.

Dip bread cubes into cheese mixture. Place on ungreased cookie sheet. Place in refrigerator overnight. Bake at 400 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes. Serve without butter.

Onion Bread

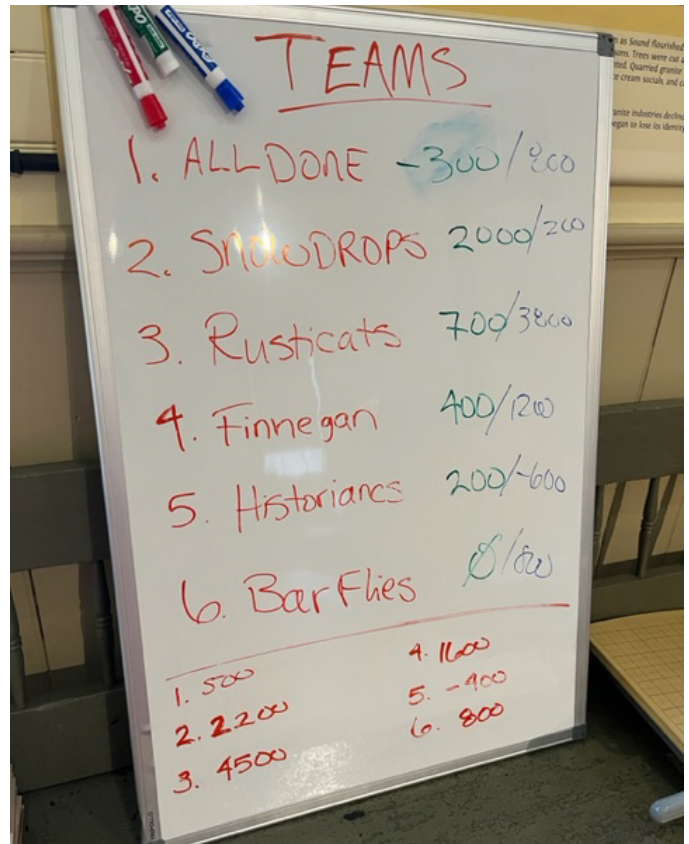
Remove crusts from 1 loaf of thinly-sliced bread. Cut each slice into triangles.

History Happy Hour

We opened our History Happy Hour season with a rousing game of Jeopardy at Peter Trout's on the evening of March 22nd. Over 25 members turned out for 2 rounds of questions based on past editions of *Chebacco*.

Good natured rivalries played out over delicious food and cocktails, with Team Rusticats pulling out an impressive win in the second round. We learned some new information (Did you know that author Elinor Wylie's *A Birthday Cake for Lionel*, imagines romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley living on Somesville's Bar Island farming, fishing and living off the land while raising two young children named Artemis and Jezebel?) celebrated island boatbuilders, and learned facts about *Chebacco* (it costs \$20,000 to produce each issue!)

We will be playing "Two Truths and a Lie" at the next History Happy Hour on May 17th at 5:30pm at the Rusticator Lounge at the Bayview Hotel, Bar Harbor, and continuing every other month through December.



Vintage Classroom expands after receiving \$3,000 grant

The Mount Desert Island Historical Society is pleased to announce we are the recipient of a \$3,000 grant from the Witham Family Hotels Charitable Fund for our 2023 Vintage Classroom, an experiential learning program for AOS 91 3rd graders.

For over 20 years, Vintage Classroom has offered students an entertaining and fun way to learn what life was like for children on Mount Desert Island in the late 1800's. Students and teachers often dress up to play the part of 1890's students as they file into the schoolhouse for a traditional lesson with Mrs. Abbott (played by volunteer Wendy Littlefield.) Students are expected to obey the schoolmarm and follow a strict lesson plan using historically accurate readers and slate boards. The Historical Society collaborates with actors and musicians from Barn Arts to offer a music lesson, perform interactive skits and play historically accurate games.

The program is free and, thanks to this grant, has now expanded to include Swan's Island Elementary and the Community School.

We are grateful for the Witham Family Hotels Charitable Fund's dedication to island education and to our

commitment to celebrate the lives of the people, their traditions, and the events that have shaped, and will continue to shape, our shared history.

Barn Arts photo from Vintage Classroom practice.

