



8 RIVER ROAD, P.O. BOX 34, BUXTON, ME 04093

# BUXTON-HOLLIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INCORPORATED 1970 ♦ <http://www.buxtonhollishistorical.org> ♦ SPRING 2013

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- Julie Larry, *Hollis Building Survey*
- Beth Gardner, *Newsletter Editor*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

*"Change is not a bolt of lightning that arrives with a zap. It is a bridge built brick by brick, every day, with sweat and humility and slips. It is hard work, and slow work, but it can be thrilling to watch it take shape."*

The quote above by Sarah Hepola appeared in the summer 2012 newsletter and continues to be very appropriate to the situation in which we now find ourselves. It is with a sense of amazement that after several long years of struggling to save three wonderful old school buildings from demolition, we have achieved a measure of success: the *Hanson School* (classroom section) has been repurposed for use by MSAD 6; BHHS will be moving to the *Bar Mills Elementary School* (old Administrative Offices on Route 4A in Bar Mills) to become an history center and permanent home for the BHHS library and museum, thanks to MSAD 6 agreeing to lease the building to the historical society; and, since the town of Hollis has refused it, the old *Hollis High School* will be offered for sale on the open market.

BHHS is planning to rehabilitate the Bar Mills building to conform to current codes, etc., while maintaining its historic character. We are so very grateful to have been awarded two grants to begin the rehabilitation process: the first from *Narragansett Number One Foundation*, which will be used for a new boiler, water heater and lining for the chimney; and the second from *Maine Preservation* to use for legal and related fees. We are in the process of obtaining estimates for other projects, *i.e.*, adding insulation to the attic floor, replacing the attic and cellar windows, installation of a wheelchair lift, removing carpeting and sanding floors, etc.

We hope that you will be enthusiastic about this exciting project! Please know that we welcome any assistance in whatever way you are able! The BHHS Board has scheduled **April 13, 14, 20, and 21** for packing up at the Moderation space where we have been located for the past six years. We appreciate so very much the donation of that space by our very generous landlords, Butch and Karen Yarumian. We will be moving large furniture on **April 20** and boxes on **April 21**. We have also scheduled **May 3, 4, 5, 10, and 11** for demolition in the new space. Please come to help for a day, or part of a day! See the event calendar on page 2 for details.

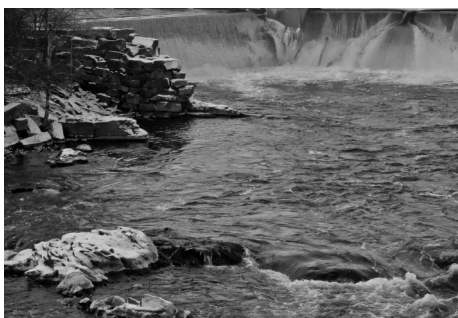
**Our museum and library will not be open for research in April as usual because of our anticipated move, but we hope to be open by June 15 for limited use in our new space. Call 929-3647 or 929-8895 to leave an inquiry and callback number or check our webpage for updates to the schedule: [www.buxtonhollishistorical.org](http://www.buxtonhollishistorical.org).**

To diminish membership date confusion, we are changing to a *Membership Calendar Year of January 1 to December 31* and a *Budget Fiscal Year of July 1 to June 30* in order to coincide with the Towns of Buxton and Hollis.

We are also placing information about BHHS, along with historic house rehab/restoration and ancient cemeteries resources, in Buxton's newly created, informative welcome packets for new residents! The packets are nicely done and full of good, helpful information about the Town.

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*Happy Spring!*

Jan Hill, *President*

# **WE ARE MOVING!**

New Location:  
100 Main Street (Route 4A),  
Bar Mills, Maine

## **BHHS Society Library & Museum Hours:**

*Primarily a Non-Lending Library for Historical and Genealogical Research  
Buxton, Hollis and York County*

**Open 2nd and 4th Fridays and Saturdays  
June through October, 2013 1:00pm to 4:00pm**



**N.C. Watson School One-Room School Museum**  
*Groveville Road, Buxton Center*

**Open 1st and 3rd Saturdays 1:00pm to 4:00pm  
May 4th through October 19th, 2013; or by special appointment.**  
*Call Stacey Gagnon 929-2141*

## **Upcoming Events and Programs 2013**

**April 13 and 14 ☺ 9am:** *Packing Party, Moderation Museum. 8 River Road, Buxton. Come help get items boxed, marked and ready to move to our new location! Come for the day or for any amount of time you can spare! Bring a sandwich for lunch; Beverages and Dessert will be provided.*

**April 20, Saturday ☺ 9am:** *Move cases, large pieces from Moderation Museum to new building portables for storage.*

**April 21, Sunday ☺ 9am:** *Meet at Moderation Museum. Move boxes to new building portables for storage.*

**April 27, Saturday ☺ 9am:** *Clean space at Moderation (8 River Road, Buxton).*

**May 3, 4, 5 ☺ 9am:** *Demolition of added interior walls, Bar Mills School. 100 Main Street, Rt. 4A, Bar Mills. Bring a hammer, sledgehammer, crowbar, dust mask and work gloves if you'd like to be on the demo crew! Bring your lunch.*

**May 10 & 11 ☺ 9am:** *Remove old carpeting, Bar Mills School. 100 Main Street, Rt. 4A, Bar Mills.*

**May 17 & 18 ☺ 9am:** *Prep and paint, Bar Mills School. 100 Main Street, Rt. 4A, Bar Mills.*

**June 1 & 2 ☺ 9am:** *Move furniture and bookcases into place, Bar Mills School. 100 Main Street, Rt. 4A, Bar Mills.*

**June 4, Tuesday ☺ 6:30 to 9pm:** *"Settling In" Workshop. Help get the research library and office set up and arranged for business in our new location!*

**June 8, Saturday ☺ 9am:** *Help move boxes from Weeman's garage. 902 Plains Road, Buxton.*

**June 15, Saturday ☺ 1pm to 4pm:** *Research library opens for the 2013 year at the new location! Thereafter, library will be open the second and fourth Fridays and Saturdays of the month, July through October.*

**July 20, Saturday ☺ 9am to 3pm:** *Buxton Community Days/Dorcas Fair; BHHS Sale Table. First Congregational Church of Buxton, Church Lawn, corner of Routes 112 and 202.*

**July 20, Saturday ☺ 9am to noon:** *"Work in Progress" Tours of new building. Bar Mills Elementary School (Old MSAD 6 Administrative Offices), 100 Main Street, Bar Mills.*

**August 13, Tuesday ☺ 6:30pm:** *Tour of Pease Homestead. Join us for a tour of the Pease Homestead, 75 Pease Road, Buxton. Although one of the earliest remaining houses of Buxton, we believe it was moved to its present location. The mystery is: **from where?** Our hosts are Mary Ann Saxby & Ken Johnson.*

**September; October; November programs:** *To Be Announced.*

## Home At Last!

The Buxton-Hollis Historical Society Board is delighted and excited to announce that we have finalized a lease agreement with RSU#6 for our use of the Bar Mills Elementary School (formerly the school district's administrative office) as our permanent home. Many of you already know that we lost our space in the old Buxton Town Hall when the ceiling, alas, collapsed. Robert (Butch) Yarumian of *Maine Boundary Consultants*, and his wife, Karen, rescued us during the past six years by providing a lovely space in their historic building at Moderation Village/West Buxton.

We have been able to maintain some displays of our wonderful artifacts and a room for the research library during this time, but we have outgrown these quarters. We need more library space—the library was crowded with researchers this past summer. We need more museum space—we have been unable to display many artifacts and collections. We need our own meeting space, although Pat and Andy Packard of the Saco River Theatre and Old White Church have been gracious and supportive of our meetings. We have also been able to use the First Congregational Church Parish Hall.

We have gone to community groups to present information about our rich heritage here in Buxton and Hollis, but having a place to hold workshops with the artifacts right at hand will give us an opportunity to expand the impact of these programs. We especially look forward to sharing our history and museum items in the new building with students from the district in cooperation with their teachers and their history curricula.

We also expect that this wonderful location, centrally located near the Buxton and Hollis town lines and close to several highways, will provide better exposure and access to both townspeople and to visitors in the area. We have seen a large increase in the number of people locally and from away who have visited us and/or contacted us requesting genealogical information.

One of the biggest advantages of the historical society's use of the building is that the school is



part of the Bar Mills Village historic district, as recently identified by the Maine Department of Transportation consultants. We are surrounded by many early and important buildings of Bar Mills Village, on both sides of the Saco River. At one time these villages were a hub of family life, business, and social activities.

BHHS will be responsible for rehabilitating the building, enhancing as many of its historic characteristics as possible and updating it to modern day code and comfort requirements. A major priority will be to install a new boiler and water heater and lining the chimney, made possible because of a generous grant from *Narragansett Number One Foundation*. Other immediate plans include tearing out some of the temporary walls, recreating the larger spaces of the original classrooms and restoring the original hardwood floors. We will also modify building accessibility to conform to the Americans With Disabilities Act.

We know that it is a big project for us to undertake, but we are confident that with your support we will create an important resource for Buxton and Hollis. We believe it will contribute to the quality of life in our communities and encourage us all to appreciate the vision of those who came before us, building a foundation for our lives both today and tomorrow.

# Pleasant Hill, West Hollis, Maine: What A History!

*Indian Deals, Land Speculation, Witches, Religious Non-Conformers, Squatters...*

*and that's just the 17th century!*

**N**ote: I often find that my ideas are more ambitious than my time and energy allows. Some months ago I conceived the idea that instead of writing isolated pieces from Hollis and Buxton historical events, I would present separate villages or areas as an historical spectrum. In this vein, I decided to choose West Hollis/Pleasant Hill Road — a relatively contained area — to begin my project. Little did I know! I could write a book about the long and interesting history of the people and events that shaped these few square miles! However, I will make a beginning, and perhaps it can “be continued” at a later time. Special thanks to Millie Hanson and Butch Yarumian. —*Meg Gardner*

Pleasant Hill Road meanders up and around Pleasant Hill, connecting what used to be the “County Road” (Deerwander) with Cape Road (Route 117). Don’t be fooled by appearances. This peaceful section of Hollis with its old Cape homes and a church that crowns it has historical tentacles that reach out to the earliest chaotic events that have shaped our American tapestry.

We know that Native Americans roamed this area. The hunting was particularly good here, and the white men who had moved into Massachusetts recognized this wealth very early. Traders were the first to follow the trails up the Saco River and to brave going into the wild, bartering for furs which were then exported to foreign countries.

The fur trade spurred interest in an even more lucrative natural resource: lumber. As early as the mid-17th century lumber sources in the Massachusetts Bay Colony were becoming scarce. Demand for lumber was enormous, not just for houses, but for the burgeoning ship building business and export trade. Land speculation became a driving economic force. There was a race to acquire as much land as possible by virtually any means. By the time of King Philip’s War (1675-1676) the demand for lumber had pushed intrepid woodsmen into the wild Maine frontier, joining fur traders who had built “truck houses” along the Saco River.

We first recognize the tract of land that includes “Pleasant Hill” when Major William Phillips of Winter Harbor (Biddeford Pool) and his third wife Bridget Hutchinson expanded their prosperous lumber business and built more mills upriver. Phillips was a wealthy and successful Boston wine merchant and lumberman. Bridget was the daughter of Anne Hutchinson, a vocal dissident who had been banished from Massachusetts.

Major Phillips went on a buying spree in southern Maine and soon owned a very large section of what is now York County which he had purchased from several Native American Sagamores: Hombinowitt, or John Rogomock of Saco, Fluellin (“sometimes residing in Saco”), and Captain Sunday, or

Meeksombe. One of these tracts encompassed the area we now call Hollis.

Part of Phillips’s motivation to purchase land were reports of lodes of silver and silver mines in the mountains of western Maine. Major Phillips apparently looked forward to diversifying his businesses, becoming even wealthier once he found these fabled mines. Whole mountains glittered with silver, according to the stories. Alas, no “silver mountains” were ever discovered. Some think that the “silver” was probably mica glittering in the sun. One wonders whether the Native Americans who encouraged the silver stories knew the truth and embroidered it in order to get more value for the land and to fool the white man, or whether they themselves were deceived by the shiny mineral. I favor the first theory.

Some sources say that Major Phillips paid the Sagamores with a few blankets and trinkets. This might have been true, based on previous exchanges between them and the colonists. However, it is more likely that he paid the tribes with European goods, which they had begun to covet and to rely on. In effect the Native Americans swapped their land resources, which had provided food for many generations (both meat and vegetables), in order to acquire European consumer goods (including firearms). This depletion of their natural resources gradually eroded their independence. Clashes between would-be settlers and the Native Americans became more frequent, more volatile, and much more aggressive. King Philip’s War exploded from the Native Americans’ anger about the encroachment of colonists on their territories. Although that war was located primarily in southern New England, some of the worst fighting took place in Maine and New Hampshire.

When Winter Harbor came under attack by Native Americans at the beginning of King Philip’s War, neighbors gathered at Major Phillips’s garrison for refuge and were able to withstand the attack. Unfortunately, this defeat didn’t deter the Native Americans, who continued their assaults and burned all of the mills along the Saco River. It was probably because Phillips was “land poor” and needed money in order to rebuild his mills that led him to sell 2,500 acres of his land lying west of the Saco River in April 1675. A prosperous merchant from Charlestown, Massachusetts, named Richard Russell bought the parcel. Phillips included a sixteenth part of the “silver mine” property in the sale to Mr. Russell.

Mr. Russell died in May of 1676. There is no record that he ever visited his Maine property, not even the “silver” mines. The property became known as the “Russell Right” and no one paid much attention to it. Traders and lumbermen drifted back up to

*(Continued on page 5)*

## “Names of Places and Their Origins”

Bar Mills on Saco River—“Just below the railroad bridge across Saco River about a quarter of a mile above the village is the cropping out of the ledge which extends across the river from side to side from the Buxton bank to the Hollis, in the shape of a bar, which in high water is covered, but most of the time is out in sight. This bar of rocks gave rise to the name of the miles below and to the village.” ~From the Narragansett Sun, December 1915

*Early Maine Law*

*"In Maine, under a State Law, a person obtaining a judgment against any town, if the town is unable to pay, may seize the personal or real property of any of its inhabitants and apply such property toward satisfying the judgment.*

*Such a case recently occurred. This town owed \$190, and the Sheriff levied on some oxen belonging to a farmer, which brought \$160, and the Sheriff (sic) will have to make another raid. The town has other debts and future levies are expected. The town is poor and the land almost worthless, the ground being so rocky that they have to plant grain with a shotgun. The only redress the inhabitant has is to follow the same plan — get judgment against the town and have someone else's property seized, as he is entitled to recover the full value of his property with 12% additional. By pursuing this endless chain the town debt will eventually be wiped out — and the town also."*

*~From "The Iron Era," Dover, Morris County New Jersey, Friday, December 28, 1900*

*\*Maybe this is the answer to all of the circular information when we are seeking to verify land transactions?*

*(Continued from page 4)*

the area and helped themselves to furs and trees, but few wanted to settle there in the aftermath of King Philip's War.

The heir to Mr. Russell's "Right" was his son, the Rev. Daniel Russell. The Rev. Russell was very involved with Harvard College. He bequeathed 1,000 acres of his Maine inheritance to the college, and the tract became known as the "College Right." He died at the turn of the century and the property continued to languish.

In the meantime, King William's War raged from 1688-1697. Many young men from Massachusetts went to war against the French and their Native American allies and were killed or wounded. The earlier refugees had started to drift back to Maine. Now they fled back to Massachusetts for refuge. The prior war had left many widows and children, creating an economic strain on those who provided them shelter. This new outbreak of war and its subsequent toll of husbands and fathers increased that burden.

Essex County was particularly hard hit with the burden of having to provide aid. It was also more vulnerable to attack as it was closer to the front and had no protection. The need for more land became a crisis. Squabbles about gardening spots and timber harvesting grew more contentious. On top of all these difficulties, a smallpox epidemic was raging with deadly consequences.

The greatest catastrophe, however, was the complete collapse of the land speculation economy. Virtually all of those who had invested in Maine land lost their wealth. The prosperity of the colony had become almost totally dependent on building ships, exporting lumber to Europe, and returning with merchandise. With no supply of trees, there was no more trade.

Losing their source of wood also meant that housing resources were compromised, especially with the influx of refugees. Furniture couldn't be built. There was a shortage of fuel. Such chaos!

A final deep-rooted specter was that of prevailing religious beliefs. Many of the folks who had gone to Maine were outside the mainstream religious doctrines of the Puritans and the theocracy that governed Massachusetts. These deep beliefs were the foundation of the colony and had fostered the "Great Migration" from England after the British civil war when the Church of England regained its former status.

The refugees who were retreating from the war in Maine and using the sparse resources of the towns of Salem, Danvers, and other Essex towns were not part of the mainstream religious beliefs. They had moved up into the wild lands of Maine initially in order to escape persecution for practicing their own theology and rejecting that of the Puritans. They were often Quakers, or Baptists, both of which were labeled "suspect."

It is hardly any wonder that this paranoid environment created a volatile situation in which, when cries of witchcraft

were raised, the relief of being able to focus on a "real" instigator of their troubles provoked communities to embrace the charges. We must remember and accept that belief in Devil and demonology was real and present in the minds of the Puritans. It was not abstract. A major contribution to the pervasive anxiety of the colonists was that the wilderness, with its darkness, stifling vegetation, and ferocious animals, was believed to be the very dwelling place of Satan. The savage Native Americans, creeping about and attacking, wearing wild and sometimes frightening clothes, speaking an odd language — they must be Satan's demons. The good citizens of Essex County became convinced that anyone who had traded with or bought land from the Native Americans had in effect signed a pact with the Devil himself. This, of course, did not bode well with the Maine refugees and fueled resentment against their dependence on aid from the community.

Some of the people connected with Pleasant Hill fell into this latter category. Of course, the land itself represented a pact with the Devil under this belief system. William Phillip's land speculations had contributed heavily to the colony's economic collapse. Even worse, Phillip's wife Bridget was the daughter of Anne Hutchinson. Anne Hutchinson had been banished from Massachusetts Bay Colony because of her theological differences with the orthodox church fathers. Bridget, herself a Quaker, had been publicly whipped because she refused to accept Puritan doctrine (Major Phillips may, in fact, have established himself in Maine and moved from Boston in part to protect his wife).

The bad reputation associated with Pleasant Hill thus protected it after the Rev. Russell died and Harvard College acquired the now worthless tract. Harvard certainly didn't have any use for it, although they did send a surveyor up here. The parameters of the property were in great dispute, anyway, as Russell had bequeathed a lot of overlapping plots to various people and boundaries were unclear. It did appear to any casual observer that it was a "wasteland" or "common land" where a man could stake his claim without impunity.

People again made their way up the hill, many of them trying to escape the turmoil that was the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The names of these families are familiar: Townsend, Ridlon, Usher, Smith, Tarbox, Gillpatrick, and Haley, for example. They knew a good place when they saw it.

**Afterword**

*I was astonished to discover the connections between Pleasant Hill (and the rest of Hollis and Buxton) and the Salem witch hysteria. I hope that I will be able to continue the story of Pleasant Hill later or perhaps through another venue. Believe me, we've only just begun — and we haven't even touched the fascinating individuals who created and shaped this corner of Maine, a microcosm of the whole history of the United States.*

# 2013 Membership Form

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Send my newsletter electronically  Send my newsletter by snail mail

*We are in need of help with moving to our new location this spring!  
Can YOU help in any of the following ways?*

- Packing up
- Cleaning
- Moving
- Unpacking/Setup
- Library Volunteer
- Demo/Carpentry/Painting

BUXTON-HOLLIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Annual Dues Level**

Membership calendar year: January 1 to December 31, 2013

Individual — \$10.00

Family — \$20.00

Patron — \$50.00

Sustaining — \$100.00

Founder — \$500.00

Please note on your check the calendar year for which you would like your dues applied.

Questions? Call or email Kathy Kendrick: [kathke@sacortver.net](mailto:kathke@sacortver.net) 207-229-9498

Donations are Tax Deductible and are Gratefully Accepted!

Please make your check out to:  
Buxton-Hollis Historical Society  
and send to:

Kathleen Kendrick,  
BHHS Membership Chair  
P.O. Box 236, Hollis Center, Maine 04042

BUXTON-HOLLIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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