

Friends of the Southport Historical Society

P. O. Box 3, Southport, ME 04576

HENDRICKS HILL MUSEUM

Newsletter ***** November 2016

Donald Duncan, Editor

Friendly Reminder

Perhaps we failed to send you a letter in March, or perhaps you forgot to reply, but several of our loyal supporters have not yet responded in 2016. If you see an X on the label attached to this newsletter, we have not heard from you. If you would like to respond, please send your check in any amount (payable to The Friends of the Southport Historical Society) to Cathy Messmer at PO Box 3, Southport ME 04576. If you think we have made a mistake, please let me know [Donald Duncan, 32 Blair Road, Southport ME 04576 or donaldduncan@roadrunner.com]

Phyllis Pinkham Cook 1920 – 2016

When Phyllis Cook died on August 11, 2016, Southport lost a treasure. Phyllis was a Trustee of the Historical Society and served on many Town committees. But beyond that she was a source of endless information about the Town in days gone by. She was the youngest of the four daughters of Charles and Izetta Pinkham, longtime Southport storekeepers. She suffered from macular degeneration and was blind for the final years of her life. Nevertheless, she was forever cheerful and would answer the question “How are you, Phyllis?” with the remark, “Improving every day.” She did not want a memorial service to celebrate her life, but asked that people go to Moody’s Diner and have a piece of pie! Nevertheless there was a service of remembrance in October at the Southport Methodist church. Phyllis was indeed unique.

The following appeared in the Society’s Island Tales where one can find many more of Phyllis’s stories.

Southport’s Annie Oakley

When Phyllis Cook was around 14 or 15 in the mid nineteen thirties, her father taught her to fire a shotgun. They would go to a secluded spot on the Cross Road and Charlie would toss skeets from a skeet thrower. Phyllis was pretty good and hit most of them.

Each Thanksgiving Day the Fire Department would sponsor a shooting match on the West Road (now Hendricks Hill Road) at the spot where the fire break crosses the Island (between Cozy Harbor and Newagen). Phyllis wanted to enter, and Charlie took her down. She had never shot a rifle before, but she was confident that she could do well. Several of the men had already fired and her turn came. The men went down the range to get her target and brought it back. They all gathered together around a table looking at the target. Phyllis couldn't even get near the table for the crowd. The men occasionally looked over their shoulders at this whippersnapper of a girl who wondered if she had even hit the target, much less the bull's eye.

It appeared that her target was better than all the rest, and that she was the leader to win the brand new rifle that was the day's prize. It wasn't until the middle of the afternoon that Max Brackett of the Harbor appeared and outshot her to win. She says today that it would have been a great embarrassment to all the men to have had a GIRL win, but she still takes considerable pride in her performance. Just to think that Southport might have had her own Annie Oakley.

Annual Meeting

Sarah Sherman McGrail gave a wonderfully informative talk on her newest publication, Looking Back, Volumes I and II. These biographies tell the important stories of both the Korean War (1950-1953) and Vietnam War (1964-1975). Over 200 local men and women veterans from Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor East Boothbay and Southport are included. Some of the biographies are as short at 100 words, while other veterans opened up and their stories are told over 20 to 30 pages. McGrail used hundreds of photographs from the wars collected from the veterans, their families or other sources.

Orders for Looking Back, Volume I and Volume II at \$24.95 each are now being accepted. Contact McGrail at Cozy Harbor Press, Inc., P.O. Box 385, Southport, ME 04576. Telephone 207-633-7161 or email:sarah@cozyharborpress.com for more information and to place your order.

The Danforth Tower

Ann Roche



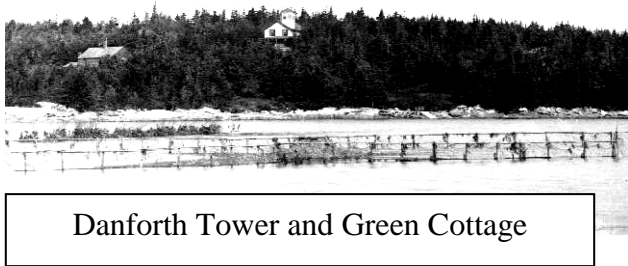
South End of Pratt's Island from
the Danforth Tower

This past summer Ron Orchard brought out of storage the first of two boxes of glass negatives depicting Southport scenes around the turn of the twentieth century. One of the negatives was labeled "south end of Joe's Island from Danforth's tower," and another taken from Joe's Island shows the tower and the nearby

Green cottage. (Note: Joe's Island is now Pratt's Island.)

"Who was Danforth and where was his tower?" That was the question puzzling museum volunteers in July. In looking at the print, the guess was that the location of the tower was in the Stowaway Road vicinity, but no one could recall a "tower" or a family by that name owning property there.

At a later date the second box of negatives was opened to reveal a numbered, annotated list of the contents of both boxes in addition to letters pertaining to the museum's acquisition of these treasures. From information on the list it was determined that the Danforth place was up the hill behind the Green cottage which was at the end of Stowaway Road.



Danforth Tower and Green Cottage

This collection of over 150 glass negatives was donated by Dorothy Towle Acheson, initially to the Boothbay Region Historical Society which passed it on to Southport Historical Society. The collection represents the photography of Mrs. Acheson's father, O. C. Towle, who, with his family, summered for a number of years at a cottage at the end of Stowaway Road, known then as the Green cottage.

His brother, J. H. Towle, rented the nearby cottage then called the Danforth place. Most of the negatives are accompanied by prints that are of varying quality but clear enough to identify the subject matter--the buildings, inhabitants and vistas in and around the Cozy Harbor area as they were in 1889 and 1900.

In a letter Mrs. Acheson wrote to Cecil Pierce in 1981, she included this vivid reminiscence. "I remember lobsters, bought from Mr. Huskins for 7 cents or 8 cents a pound; a cent more if he cooked them for us. Think of it! Once, our lobsters were dumped live on a pile of wood behind the cookstove in the Green kitchen. Their claws were not plugged and they seized onto sticks of wood, and Father had great trouble getting them into the wash boiler to boil."

The slides as well as the correspondence between Cecil Pierce and Mrs. Acheson are available in the reference room at the museum and visitors are most welcome to peruse this collection.

News from Evan Stevens

I was astonished to learn that Evan is now a senior at Bowdoin! It seems only yesterday that he spent summers with us as a Museum intern. As I recall, he went to Bowdoin thinking his future lay in Computers and Science. He took an Art course in his Freshman year and was rapidly converted to the field of visual arts.

Last Spring he applied for an internship at Boston Museum of Fine Arts. There were fifty interns and he was one of only four who were paid! He is currently working

at Bowdoin as a curator at the Visual Arts Center of their not insignificant art museum.

Let us all take (perhaps undeserved) pride that we had a part in the career of a young man who began his museum interest in Southport.

Isabelle Curtis, Intern

Again, in 2016, the Friends have hired an intern who is at the Museum whenever it is open. This year our intern is Isabelle Curtis who finished her sophomore year at Boothbay Regional High School in June of 2016. She is an enthusiastic student of history and her history teacher encouraged her to apply. Evelyn Sherman, Ron Orchard, Donald Duncan and Dick Snyder interviewed her in May and she was offered the job.



Every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, she puts out the “Museum Open” sign near the street and helps Ron get the place ready for its 11:00 AM opening. Most of her time has been spent checking the contents in each room and being sure that all the items have been properly inventoried and recorded in the computer and in the booklets that are in each room. A visitor now can be sure that each item is described in the loose-leaf notebook that is in each room. For instance, the strange item that looks like an iron cricket that is on display in the kitchen is actually a boot jack dating from about 1870 and was given to the Museum in 1995 by Hill Sandidge. The picture shows that it is about nine inches long.

Isabelle has completed work in the Parlor, Kitchen and Map Room and is now (August 2016) working on the Pantry. She has found that some of the items that have been entered into the computer still need pictures taken and has been working on that project as well. When asked what items were most interesting to her, she immediately spoke of the boot jack illustrated here and the 1772 Sproule Map. [See the article in the 2015 Newsletter for more information on Sproule.] Isabelle spoke of the remarkable detail of that map.



She has always been interested in history and this summer has really put her in touch with things historical. She spent some time transcribing a Civil War letter written by a heart-sick woman to her husband on the battlefield. She (Isabelle) could then really see first-hand the spelling and punctuation (or lack thereof!) and realize that things were very different 153 years ago.

Donna Climo and Sherry Tibbetts at the Town Hall asked “Who is that lovely person who works at the Museum. She is SO pleasant and cheerful.” We have been fortunate to have Isabelle to help in the Museum, and since one of our published

purposes is “To promote study and educational opportunities and to notify the public of these findings,” Isabelle has been a great support in that endeavor.

The Governor Cobb

In the 1940’s Ronald Orchard was walking along the old road that went from just west of the site of the museum north towards the site of the current boatyard. Something shiny caught his eye among the leaves in the woods and he picked up a small teapot marked “Governor Cobb.” He took it home, and when the Museum opened in 1988 he added the teapot to the collection.

Further research on the Internet has revealed the story of the steamer, *Governor Cobb*. Built in 1906 by the Delaware River Iron Ship Building and Engine Works for the Eastern Steamship Company, she carried passengers and freight between Boston and New Brunswick, Canada. She was 300 feet long, drew 14 feet and carried over 500 passengers.



On one of these trips along the New England coast, someone stole “our” teapot that later found its way to Southport and the bright eyes of a youthful Ronald Orchard.

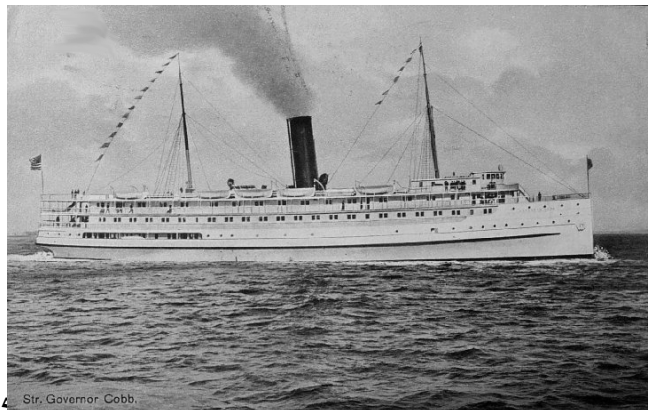
Not all of the trips of the *Governor Cobb* were uneventful. After World War I she entered the Boston–Yarmouth service and on Saturday, July 19, 1919 she ran ashore in Casco Bay. The following information is from the Yarmouth Herald via the internet:

“S. S. Governor Cobb Aground”

“Yarmouth became greatly alarmed early on Saturday morning when a wireless message was received from Capt. Call, of the steamer *Governor Cobb*, stating that the ship was ashore on the southern end of Green Island, about six miles from Yarmouth Cape, and asked that assistance be sent..... Upon arrival at Green Island, it was soon seen that there was positively no danger and that the *Governor Cobb* would float off at the next tide.

“At 10 o'clock Capt. Kinney received another wireless from Capt. Call stating that the ship was resting easily, she was not leaking and that he expected her to float about 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock Yarmouth time.

“In conversation with Capt. Call after reaching port he stated that the fog had been very thick all the week and



Str. Governor Cobb

particularly so on Wednesday evening's trip. When the *Cobb* left Boston on Friday with 529 passengers on board there was still fog, which became much thicker through that night, until Saturday morning it was extremely so. It was just 6:16 when Capt. Call discerned the dark loom of the land directly ahead and instantly signaled full speed astern and threw the wheel hard to port. As he did so he observed the breakers right under the bow and immediately saw he could not clear them and put the wheel hard to starboard and in doing so his ship was saved from striking on tremendous rocks and boulders that as the tide ebbed emerged from the water on all quarters.

“The escape of the *Governor Cobb* from very serious damage was most miraculous for at low water it could be plainly seen that by Capt. Call's prompt action the ship found the only smooth, even piece of bottom about the rugged shores of that island, where she lay resting on a perfectly even keel in about five feet of water. The ship struck very easily with scarcely a jar and many of the passengers hardly knew that anything out of the ordinary had occurred. Capt. Call and his officers immediately assured them that everything was perfectly safe and there was absolutely no danger or need of alarm, consequently no panic or alarm ensued, and as the tugs and steamers from Yarmouth reached the scene the many passengers were apparently contentedly strolling about the decks or lounging in the *Cobb's* palatial saloons.”

At the next tide the *Governor Cobb* refloated without incident. 1930 found her in the Port Tampa–Key West–Havana service of the Peninsular & Occidental Steamship Company. During World War II she was converted into a helicopter landing ship.

During World War II, *Governor Cobb* was acquired by the United States Coast Guard which was in the process of testing the effectiveness of the newly developed Sikorsky helicopter for anti-submarine warfare. The Coast Guard renamed the ship *USCGC Cobb (WPG-181)* and carried out extensive modifications, including removal of much of the superstructure and the installation of a large 38 × 63 foot flight deck for the purpose of testing helicopter take-offs and landings at sea. *USCGC Cobb* thus became the world's first helicopter carrier.

On 29 June 1944, the first successful take-off from a ship underway was performed from the flight deck of *USCGC Cobb*. She also later took part in some of the first helicopter search-and-rescue trials. In 1946 the *Cobb* was decommissioned; in 1947 she was sold and scrapped.

Quite a saga brought to us by a simple teapot and a bright-eyed scavenger!

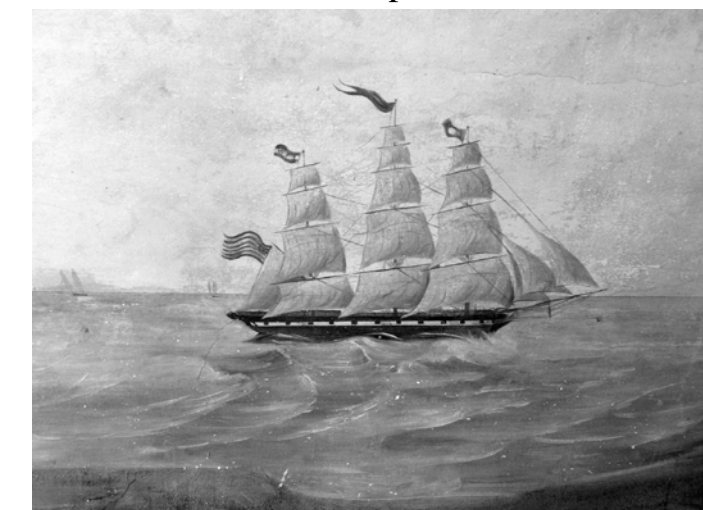
The Mystery of the *W. F. Tarbox*

Last year's Newsletter told of Gary Snowman's upcoming book, Watching the Horizon, about the early families of Cape Newagen and included the story of the loss of the fishing schooner *W. F. Tarbox* in September 1857. The story is briefly mentioned on page 384 of Greene's History.

Captained by Ebenezer Lundy of Newagen and a largely Newagen crew, she sailed for the Bay of Chaleur for mackerel. On the way home, after passing through the gut of Canso between Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island, she set off for Southport and was never seen again. It is surmised that she was run down by a trans-Atlantic steamer off the eastern shore of Nova Scotia leaving many at Newagen widowed or orphaned.

In March of 2016 your editor received an email from Callie Connor of Westport who had read the Newsletter and wanted to visit our museum. Ron Orchard and Donald Duncan met with Callie and her husband, Bob, and they were duly impressed by our museum and the way that the contents were exhibited.

It appears that there is a mural painted on the walls of the Connor's house in Westport depicting a ship flying a pennant with the letters W.F.T. She thinks the mural was painted around 1859 by an itinerant artist in that a similar mural is in the Baptist church at Five Islands.



The ship on Connor's wall is three masted and square rigged, so it is in no way an accurate portrait of the *Tarbox* that was lost. Nevertheless, the mural has lots of weeping willows and thus seems to be some sort of memorial. Close by in Westport are the graves of William F. Tarbox and his parents.

In the 1800s, Southport and Westport were much closer neighbors than they are today since travel was mostly by water, and it seems reasonable that there is a connection between the Westport mural and the Southport tragedy of 1857. Such is the joy of historical research. If any of the readers of this article have any light to shed on this connection or on who might have painted the Connor mural, Bob and Callie would be delighted.

On a sadder note, Gary's computer "swallowed" the entire text of his book during the winter and he is in the process of doing it all over again from his original notes. Thus the date of publication is undetermined. Another sad tale that encourages us all to back up important data!

Without our Volunteers we could not operate. There have been a total of 837 volunteer hours since last November. This year we had 306 visitors from 21 states, New Zealand, Poland and two parties from Germany. Again we give special thanks to Nan Jackson who scheduled all the guides. She kept careful track and hardly anyone missed an assignment.

Volunteers, Our Guardian Angels!

Kathy Bugbee	Dan Harle	Cathy Messmer	Dick Snyder
Phyllis Cook	Jean Hasch	Meredith Mitchell	Meg Snyder
Larry Crane	Jean Hawley	Ronald Orchard	Pegi Stengel
Fleet Davies	Toni Helming	Michael Pollard	Jean Thompson
Peter Doelp	Gene Huskins	Nancy Prisk	Priscilla Wallace
Donald Duncan	Nan Jackson	Ann Roche	Skip Williams
Joyce Duncan	Hilary Jacobs	Evelyn Sherman	Charles Weeks
Bob Eaton	Shelby Kaider	Sarah Sherman	Lois Weeks
Gerry Gamage	Mary Lou Koskela	Becky Singer	Bruce Wood
Tim Hanley	Bill Messmer	Jim Singer	Carole Zalucky

Friends of the Southport Historical Society
P. O. Box 3
Southport, ME 04576

Museum Trustees

Ronald Orchard, Chairman
Kathy Bugbee, Secretary
Mary Lou Koskela, Treasurer
Donald Duncan
Bob Eaton
Jean Hasch
Gene Huskins
Bill Messmer
Evelyn Sherman

Friends Officers/Directors

Dick Snyder, President
Jean Hawley, Vice President
Carole Zalucky, Secretary
Becky Singer, Treasurer
Shelby Kaider to 2017
Ann Roche to 2017
Larry Crane to 2018
Tim Hanley to 2018
Cathy Messmer to 2019

Phyllis Cook, Emerita