

President's Message

Dear Members and Friends,

On this beautiful summer's day, I think back to our wonderful BHHS May 22, 2016 program, a *Victorian White Party and Maypole Dances* by the West Buxton *All That Dance Studio* Competitive Dance Team. I am reminded once again of how very fortunate we are to have sponsored such an inspiring experience. The dancers, all dressed in white with their colorful individual floral crown wreaths, were breathtaking. Their youth, beauty and energy as they danced were a true joy to behold. *Filming of the event will be available soon on SRCTV's VIMEO.* Many, many thanks to Darcey Leavitt and her young dancers AND to Carla Turner for opening her historic Kate Douglas Wiggin Quillcote lawn to the over 150 people who turned out for this event! Kudos to Barry Plummer and Brent Hill who constructed and installed the Maypole and to the other BHHS Board members and friends who assisted in other ways! Many people commented on the uniqueness of the event and hoped that we would offer it again! We'll see...In the meantime, we held a follow up program on June 21: *Kate Douglas Wiggin: From Celebrity to Obscurity* by Nancy Ponzetti of Hollis. It was a wonderful way to learn more about an important figure in our community.



The Maypole dancers from All That Dance Studio.

On another note, as you know, we have been steadfastly working to rehabilitate our new headquarters building and have made a great deal of progress. At this point, we want to address the water seepage issue in the basement, not only so that we can expand into that area, but also, and probably most important, to ensure that our collection will be preserved into the future.



Energetic crew moving a case to upcoming Bar Mills exhibit area on second floor. From L to R: Steven Atripaldi, Brent Hill, Barry Plummer, Galen Cunning, Stacey Barnes, Peter Eliot (looking through the case).

We wish to express our deep gratitude to *Narragansett Number One Foundation* for their past generous support in procuring your new history center; they have made it possible for us to have a new boiler and water heater. We are now pursuing other resources to ensure that this dream to enlarge our space and secure the preservation of our growing collection comes to fruition. In that vein, we will certainly continue to search for other grants that may be available for capital projects. We must begin to consider a capital fundraiser in order to achieve this goal. We hope that you will join us in this effort.

Wolf Pack #14, a great group of 8 year olds (and their parents), visited us in early May to earn a badge on the subject "*What has changed in Buxton?*". At first, I began to think of how to narrow the subject down for a two hour program and then realized that the answer could be expressed in *one* easy word... "EVERYTHING"... (with examples of course!) HA! Quite the revelation for us all!

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(l-r) Janice Lane, Jan Hill, Nancy Pierce, Meg Gardner, Bertie Ramsdell, Betsy Clay, Barry Plummer (Brent Hill was behind the camera lens)

BHHS OFFICERS

- Janice Hill, *President*
- Barry Plummer, *Vice-President, Buxton*
- Marguerite Gardner, *Vice-President, Hollis*
- Vicki Walker, *Secretary*
- Betsy Clay, *Treasurer*

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- Stacey Gagnon, *N.C. Watson Chair*
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- Robert Yarumian, *Clerk*

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God Bless the Brick House

by Meg Gardner

God bless the brick house that was; God bless the brick house that is to be!” Rebecca Rowena Randall whispers these phrases to herself and passes from childhood to adulthood at the conclusion of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*.

Kate Douglas Wiggin was born in 1856 and died in 1923. At the time she published *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* in 1903, she was a member of the most progressive group of intellectuals of the time. Her friends included dynamic thinkers in every field, including Mr. Emerson and the “Concord Transcendentalists.” She was famous for her essays, books, and promotion of early childhood education.

Although she led distinguished intellectual and social lives in California, New York, and Europe, Ms. Wiggin retreated to her summer home “Quillcote” in Hollis to write. An article in *Antiques Digest* published in 1901 describes Quillcote as “an ideal spot...for delicate creations of the imagination.” It was here that she created a young girl, Rebecca Randall, and a story that represented a complex amalgam of Ms. Wiggin’s own personality, childhood influences, and philosophical concepts. At the center of the story is the Brick House.

The house itself is beautiful. Located on Usher Mill Road in the Bar Mills section of Hollis, it is large, solid, and comfortably settled in its milieu. It was built by Ellis B. Usher, who was born in Medford, Massachusetts, to a Revolutionary War soldier named Abijah Usher and his first wife Mary Weld Usher.



The old Ellis Usher house in Bar Mills, Hollis side, presently owned by Renee Lewis and Christian Penney.

Mrs. Wiggin probably found the Usher family even more interesting than the house, however. Their personal stories reflect their independence, integrity, respect for education, love of family, appreciation for nature, and responsibility for others.

Abijah Usher Senior was a prominent man in Medford and Massachusetts politics. Unfortunately, his wife Mary died in 1791, leaving him with three small children. Abijah remarried in 1795. As the family expanded with more children, resources were strained.

In 1799, Abijah Senior gave the two older sons, Ellis and Abijah Junior, a horse. The boys, who were about fourteen and eleven years old, left Medford and “...went on horseback to seek their fortunes in Hollis, Maine,” according to the Usher family genealogy.

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Work is continuing on to complete *All Roads Lead to Bar Mills*, our first major exhibit in our new space. Moving large items to the second floor recently proved easier than expected with good volunteer participation! Thanks, gang!

Recently, Daniel Smith, the Eagle Scout candidate who organized the prep and painting of one of our upstairs rooms AND the



The BHHS presentation of a certificate of achievement to Dan Smith, Eagle Scout candidate, last year. Standing from L to R: Robin Randell Milliken, Marguerite Gardner, Jan Hill, Daniel Smith, Betty Robicheaw, Barry Plummer, Brenton Hill. Sitting from L to R: Nancy Pierce, Roberta Ramsdell, Janice Lane.

replacement of decking for our handicap ramp as his Eagle Scout project, received his badge at a special Eagle Scout Ceremony, along with accolades for his achievements during his scouting

career. We would like to add our congratulations, as we recognized, and thanked Dan for his work here at BHHS! We wish him great success at UNH as he begins his college experience in the fall!

Come on in to see us when you can!
Best Wishes for a great summer!
Jan Hill, President

N.C. Watson School One-Room School Museum



Groveville Road
(behind Buxton Centre Baptist Church)
Buxton Center
*Open 2nd Saturday of each month from
June–October
1:00 to 4:00 PM*

For more information, to schedule a group, or to make an appointment outside posted times, please contact Stacey Gagnon
cell: (207) 229-9540
email: staceygagnon19@gmail.com

VISIT OUR HISTORY CENTER

100 Main Street, Route 4A, Bar Mills, Maine
OPEN:
Thursdays 4:00–8:00 p.m.
Saturdays 9:00–12:00 a.m.
Except holiday weekends

The BHHS newsletter is proudly sponsored by
Chad E. Poitras Cremation and Funeral Service

Funeral Home ☞ Cremation Provider
498 Long Plains Road, Buxton
929-3723

www.mainefuneral.com

Chad Poitras, BHHS member

“A local resident serving locals with dignity and respect”

ABOUT OUR NEWSLETTER

The Buxton-Hollis Historical Society Newsletter is published typically in the spring, summer and fall. The purpose of the BHHS newsletter is to develop, inform and foster a network of citizens and institutions, in the Buxton-Hollis area of Maine and beyond who unite in thought and action in collecting, preserving and publishing the early and late history of the towns of Buxton and Hollis. Contact info. provided on pg. 1.

VISIT US ONLINE

Be sure to check out our webpage (www.buxtonhollishistorical.org) and Facebook page, both managed by our own “Molly Woodman” for event photos and more news than we have room for here. Additionally, visit www.bhhsnewsletter.weebly.com to see the online version of the BHHS newsletter.

DONATIONS NEEDED!

We have many local resources available for research at our research library and museum due to generous donations over the years. Two things very helpful and interesting to genealogical researchers are needed—**Saco River Telegraph & Telephone phone books before 1965** and **Bonny Eagle High School yearbooks**. If you have either of these items or know of someone who might donate them we would be very glad to accept them for our collection and future use!

A LOOK BACK IN TIME

Bradbury Station at Hollis Center. Follow BHHS on Facebook for more historical photos!



Upcoming Events 2016

Saturday, July 23, 10 A.M.: Cruising the River II & BBQ

We had such a good time "Cruising the River" last year, we decided to do it again! So, bring your kayak or canoe, your safety gear, sunscreen and water for another excursion on the glorious Saco. This time, we put in at the Skelton Boat Landing in Dayton (formally Hollis) and flat paddle to Cook's Brook, Pleasant Point, Indian Cellar and finally to the Larry property below the Bar Mills Dam, Hollis side. A delectable BBQ follows in Bar Mills in the wonderful Burt and Barbara Pease barn on 59 Depot St. Hamburgers, hot dogs and beverage provided. We would love it if you would like to bring a side dish to share! R.S.V.P. for the cookout by *August 17* to Berty Ramsdell 929-4529 or email robertaramsdell@myottmail.com **Donations gratefully accepted.*

Saturday, August 6, 5 P.M. : A Benefit Bash in the Brewster Barn

This benefit at 8 Brewster Place, Buxton will replace the Box Lunch Auction this year!!! The venue, date and time remain the same, BUT, in addition to the social hour, there will be a bountiful "Summer Buffet" provided! For the program, we invite you to bring along one of your treasures for appraisal by the inimitable Bruce A. Buxton, acclaimed appraiser and representative of Skinner's Auctioneers of Boston. (We will even try matching Bruce's expertise with your guess on values!) Tickets \$25/person. All donations benefit the BHHS capital improvement fund. "Bee" sure to give Bev a "buzz" at 929-6495 to reserve your seat; it promises to be a fun and entertaining evening that won't break the bank!

Saturday, August 13, 9 A.M.—3 P.M. - Hollis "Pirate Fest" being held at the Hollis Sports Complex

Visit our BHHS sales table with items of local historic interest. Hope to see you there!

Saturday, August 20, 9 A.M.- 2 P.M. - Dorcas Fair (BHHS Table)

There is no Buxton Community Day this year and the Dorcas Society has moved its Dorcas Fair back to its traditional date. Come visit us at our BHHS booth on the lawn of the First Congregational Church (Tory Hill), corner Rt. 112 & 202. View and purchase local items of historic interest. Credit cards accepted.

Tuesday, September 20, 6:30: "Life in Stone"

Stone rubbing is the practice of creating an image of surface features of gravestones on paper and can reveal what was going on in an area or a specific time. Paul Barasel will discuss gravestone funeral art symbolism from the early 1600's through the late 1880's. Mr. Barasel, who has done numerous talks on the subject, began his fascination with gravestone rubbings over 40 years ago. Most recently, Mr. Barasel authored an article entitled "*This Hobby Makes 'Getting Stoned' Have a Whole New Exciting Meaning*", which appeared in the "Up Portland" Newspaper, February, 2016 edition. *Refreshments served. *Suggested donations: \$10, Seniors \$8.*

Tuesday, October 18, 6:30 P.M.: "The Evolution of Funeral Customs in New England"

As with so many other things in our daily lives, *funeral traditions* stemming from the earliest days of America have changed and evolved over the years. Customs at colonial funerals were quite different and some might even be considered strange today. Victorian society dictated strict rules for the observance of rituals related to death and dying. Today, many modern funeral customs are focused on personalizing arrangements tailored to fit the life of the deceased. Explore changing funeral customs with Chad Poitras, serving area residents and their families since 2001. Chad is Funeral Director at Chad E. Poitras Cremation and Funeral Service. *Refreshments served. *Suggested donations: \$10, Seniors \$8.*

Saturday, November 5, 5 P.M. - Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner "All Roads Lead to Bar Mills" Exhibit Celebration

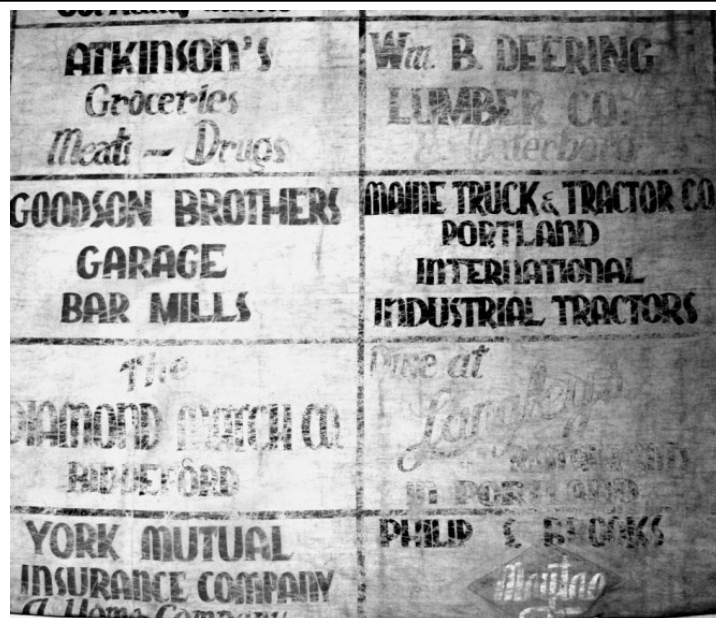
Once again, we will gather together at 100 Main Street, Bar Mills, for our Annual Meeting, election of officers and delicious potluck dinner! The program will be slides of our new Bar Mills exhibit creation process and a chance to view the exhibit. Exhibit visionary, local history resource and past BHHS President Brenton Hill, assisted by Curator Steven Atripaldi; BHHS President Jan Hill; Buxton Vice-President, Barry Plummer; and graphic design guru, Beth Gardner, have been working to create and complete our first major BHHS exhibit. It has taken an incredible amount of time and energy and we trust that you will find it well worth the effort! For dinner reservations, call Berty Ramsdell @ 929-4529 or email robertaramsdell@myottmail.com. **Suggested donations: \$10, Seniors \$8.*

***Please note that suggested donations are used to support on-going capital improvements to our new history center building.**

Philip S. Brooks: Bar Mills' Renaissance Man

by Meg Gardner

How many of you recognize this picture? If you can identify it as the painted curtain hanging in the Saco River Grange, now the Saco River Theatre, you'd be right. And, if you have ever read the interesting local businesses highlighting their wares and services, you might have noticed Philip Brooks highlighting Maytags in the lower right-hand corner.




Who was Mr. Brooks, anyway? Philip Brooks was a local young man who was born in 1879. He was fortunate enough marry his high school sweetheart, Ethel Hill*. The Hills had acquired the old Spofford house, across from the South Buxton Cemetery, through an inheritance. Because Ethel Brooks was descended from both families, she in turn had inherited it. As soon as Ethel and Philip married in June of 1903, they became immersed in community affairs. Mrs. Brooks was a life-


long member of the South Buxton Cemetery Association. Both were active in the Grange movement, with Mr. Brooks becoming Grand Master of the Saco River Grange (now renamed and repurposed as Saco River Theatre). Philip Brooks was listed as a farmer on his marriage certificate. That would soon change; he was an ambitious young man with his eye to the exciting possibilities of the new century and the Industrial Revolution.

We know that he must have been very intelligent with a flexible imagination, a mechanical bent and a businessman's orientation. Although we know this partly because several accounts refer to the couple with admiration, the very best clue is the series of

P. S. BROOKS
LIVERY, FEED and SALE STABLE
 BAR MILLS STATION



Coal, Wood, Lime, Cement, Etc.
 FARM MACHINERY,
 GASOLINE ENGINES,
 CARRIAGES,
 HARNESES, ETC.



Agency for
International Harvester Trucks
 Telephone Connection
 Bar Mills - - - Maine

advertisements he left behind as he moved through the early 1900's and its rapidly expanding inventive technologies. We see him announcing "I Am Ready for Business" with a livery stable - and additional items including lime and various machinery. A couple of years later, still in the livery business, he becomes an agent for International Harvester trucks; he also obtains a telephone connection.

BAR MILLS, MAINE, OCT. 1, 1915

This is to announce that I am ready for business at
BAR MILLS STATION
Livery, Feed & Sale Stable
 Dealing in
 COAL & WOOD, LIME, CEMENT, Etc.
 Also
 FARM MACHINERY, GASOLINE ENGINES, CARRIAGES, HARNESES, Etc.
 Soliciting your patronage, I am respectfully yours,
 P. S. BROOKS

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Fortunately the boys were not entirely adrift. Their uncle Zachariah had already established himself in Buxton as a tavern keeper. He was licensed to be a retailer of liquors, a sign of “good standing” and confidence in the community.

Young Ellis Usher worked for the Reverend Paul Coffin and for Colonel Isaac Lane. By the time he was nineteen years old he had saved enough money to buy a farm, even though he was also sending money to his family in Massachusetts.

Stories about Usher illustrate his independence and self-confidence. Some of Colonel Lane’s men, seeing him one Sunday wearing his shabby clothes, asked him derisively whether he was on his way to church. Young Ellis is said to have replied quietly, “I shall see the day when I can afford to give clothes to all of you.”

Ellis Usher worked diligently towards his goal. He added a saw mill and a store to his assets. He was beginning to prosper when a “freshet” wiped out \$5,000 worth of logs for which he still owed money. Although he was bankrupt and heavily in debt, Usher kept a positive attitude. He considered the disaster a blessing. The flooding made an island of his mill site, creating a protected place to store his logs; such was the measure of his spirit.

Others were willing to give Usher the credit he needed to rebuild his fortune because of his fine reputation and impeccable integrity. Financial disaster struck a second time during the crash of 1837. Usher had invested heavily in his timber holdings in northern Maine. He lost more than \$80,000. In spite of the devastating loss he was able to repay all his creditors. Eventually, he became the largest mill owner and lumberman on the Saco River.

Ellis Usher died in 1855, leaving a vast estate. He lacked formal education, but he had a taste for reading and knowledge. The Brick House was always full of family, friends, and business associates. Mr. Usher was active in local and state politics. During the early days of Maine statehood he served in the Senate. He helped develop the Maine State Constitution and was a signer of that document.

Usher’s first wife was Rebecca Randall, Colonel Isaac Lane’s step-daughter, who died within a few years, leaving him with two small children. He then married Hannah Lane, Colonel Lane’s daughter.

Their first child, Rebecca Randall Usher, was born in 1821. Her father supported education for women at a time when most of society thought it was a waste of time and money. Consequently, at the age of sixteen she attended the Ursuline Convent in Trois-Rivières (Three Rivers), Canada, where she studied and taught French. She returned to Maine when she was twenty.

Rebecca Usher is known to us because of her role as a military nurse during the Civil War. She was considered an ideal candidate for that position not because of her knowledge and skill in the profession, but because she was a spinster, from the middle class, and middle-aged. These qualifications were ideal for a military nurse; it was felt that she would be less likely than younger counterparts to be influenced by immoral soldiers.

When Usher returned to Maine after the war, she managed her mother’s household. The prohibition against women controlling their own financial affairs lingered. In spite of this prejudice, Usher was successful in her legal battle to gain control of her inheritance and to manage her mother’s estate.

Rebecca’s sisters Jane, Ellen, and Martha, although they lived more conventional lives, also shared many interests and philosophical values with Kate Douglas Wiggin. Jane had a lovely voice and was instrumental in developing and promoting music in Portland. Her husband, Nathan Webb, was a respected and well-known judge of the United States District Court of Maine.

The author Sarah Orne Jewett was a close friend of Martha Usher Osgood. In a tribute published in the Portland paper when Mrs. Osgood died, Jewett wrote that Martha Osgood was “...warm and devoted in her friendships, coming as she did from so generous and truly hospitable a lineage...As I look back I see that a great deal of the value of her life and character was ministered to by her love of reading, and because she believed in reading the best books.”

It is no wonder that Kate Douglas Wiggin built her novel around this family whose founder represented her own ideas of a strong work ethic, independent behavior, self-reliance, integrity, community service, and pursuit of knowledge and the arts, and whose daughters’ lives embodied all of these ideals.

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Moving along with the times, though, Phil Brooks doesn't stick with just horses and stables for long. With the advent of the automobile industry, he is right in front of the crowd as a Buick distributor. But he is not dependent on just one big item. This is farm country and a good-sized herd of dairy cows means big business. What is more logical than offering the very best milking machines to the local farmers?

Distributors of the MONCRIEF PIPELESS FURNACE

EMPIRE Milking Machines

TRADE MARK REG'D.



The Hired Man stood between Lee Rogers and his dairy profits

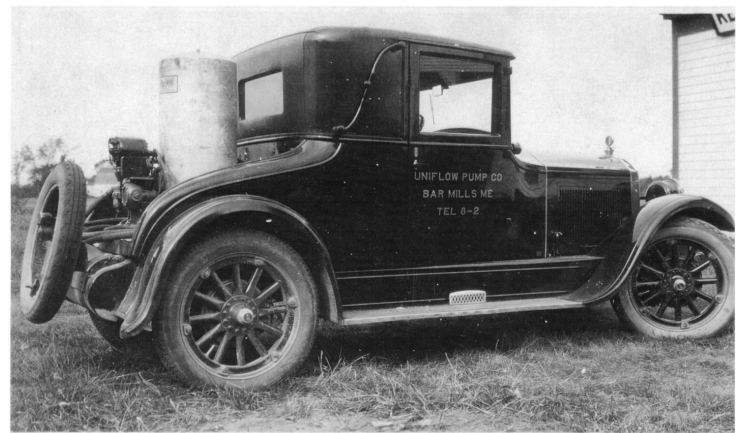
Get this straight. Lee Rogers faced a stone wall. But then the Empire Milker—nothing but the Empire Milker—put him in the way of building up a big dairy and getting big profits. Read this remarkable real life experience of a smart young farmer who knows how to meet conditions as he finds them today.

Doubles His Income with an Empire

P. S. BROOKS, Phone 8-2 Bar Mills, Me

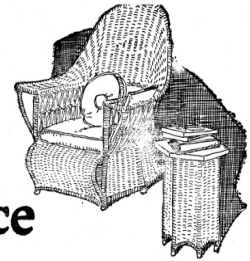
Pushing further into the realm of technological convenience, he introduces a water pump touted as good for man and beast. This wonderful machine provides easy access to fresh water for livestock and encourages cows to produce more milk (necessitating that milking machine). At about the same time Mr. Brooks advertises the latest convenience: a furnace that eliminates the need for dirty stoves in the house. Put the stove in the cellar where it belongs! Have some consideration for your overworked wife: "Men don't realize all the work women have to do. Take cleaning..." Truer words were never spoken. Once all the wives in Buxton and Hollis saw this advertisement, there would be no peace until Mr. Brooks installed the furnace. One wonders who wrote his ad copy; do you suppose it was Mrs. Brooks? Note that by now, he has his own telephone number: Bar Mills 8_2.

The crowning achievement for this pioneering business man, however, may have been his installation of running water inside homes. For this business he commissioned an automobile with advertising on the side. We are told he installed pumps to bring running water to many homes here. I remember when my grandmother had an old hand pump in her slate sink replaced with a real faucet. I wonder whether Phil Brooks installed this marvelous convenience? As were so many of the people who settled in Buxton and Hollis, Phil and Ethel Brooks had the foresight, energy, and commitment that have sustained and enhanced these communities. We are grateful.



*Full name: Emma Ethel Hill

Give Your Wife a Chance



MEN don't realize all the work a woman has to do. Take cleaning. With stoves in the house, it's never done. Ashes on the floor, soot on the walls, dust everywhere.

Put the stove in the cellar where it belongs. Install a Moncrief Pipeless Furnace. Besides dust and dirt, you'll get rid of a lot of work, save a lot of money, and get more and better heat.

There are ten good reasons why the Moncrief pipeless furnace you want. We would like the chance to show you.



MONCRIEF PIPELESS FURNACE

P. S. BROOKS
PLUMBING and HEATING
Phond 8-2 Bar Mills Me.

2016 Membership Form

(Please Print Clearly)

Name (s): _____

Street Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Cell _____ Work _____

Send my newsletter electronically _____

Send my newsletter by U. S. Mail _____

Please send us your updated email address annually to help keep our contact list current!

We are in need of volunteers to help rehabilitate our new headquarters, assist patrons in our research library and help create our new museum displays at 100 Main St., Bar Mills, Maine. Please note below how you would like to help.

2016 Annual Dues Level

(Our membership calendar year is January 1 to December 31)

___ Individual (\$10) ___ Family (\$20) ___ Patron (\$50)

___ Sustaining (\$100) ___ Founder (\$500) ___ Other

Donations are Tax Deductible and are Gratefully Accepted!

Please make checks to: Buxton-Hollis Historical Society

Send to:

Buxton Hollis Historical Society

Attn: Membership Chair

P. O. Box 34

Buxton, ME 04093

Questions? Please call 929-1684 and leave a message on our office answering machine OR go to *Contact Us* on our website www.buxtonhollishistorical.org

THANK YOU!

BUXTON-HOLLIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 34

BUXTON, MAINE 04093-0034

