

Information and Photo Tour of Buxton and the Buxton-Hollis Historical Society

The **Buxton-Hollis Historical Society** is a volunteer non-profit organization incorporated in 1970 focused on collecting, publishing and preserving local history of the Towns of Buxton and Hollis. The Society has benefited for most of its history from the financial support of the Towns of Buxton and Hollis, as well as private donations and sales of publications and other items related to the history of the area. Its non-lending research library, museum and museum store, located at the Society's new headquarters at 100 Main St. Bar Mills, is open from April through October weekly on Thursdays 4-8, and Saturdays 9-Noon, except holiday weekends. The group hosts varied monthly community education programs and sponsors special events and projects of local historical interest to the community.

In addition, the Society operates the *N.C. Watson One-Room School Museum*, saved from demolition by the Society and donors in the community. Moved from the village of Chicopee to Buxton Center, it was restored and is open for tours and programs April through the middle of October on the first and third Saturdays of the month, 1-4 PM. FMI or special appointment, call Stacey Gagon at 929-2141. The One-Room School is a wonderful opportunity to experience what school life was like in and around 1900 in rural Maine.

Past BHHS programs and events have included: local history bus tours, "haunted" cemetery tours, historic house tours, comprehensive road side building surveys of buildings over 50 years of age in both Buxton and Hollis, reports on findings of archeological digs done along the Saco River, genealogy workshops, as well as a great variety of other interesting programming. Speakers on various topics are available on request for area school history classes and community groups. Many programs are filmed and made available on *Saco River Community Television*, our area cable station. BHHS has also supported the filming of the epic DVD documentary, "*Buxton, An American Story*", which is available for sale through the BHHS museum store or by contacting the society.

The group also arranges local vital resource and records transcription, book publications of local interest and promotes awareness of early well-known artists of the Saco Valley. To focus on and preserve the rich history of individuals and their rural life experience, the Society has filmed an instructional video on how to interview and compile information for digital recording, compiling and editing of life stories of local residents. Several life stories have been completed and are available to the public at the Society's research library.

Volunteers are always welcome and needed to assist patrons in the research library, serve on various committees, assist with accessioning of donated items, help with the rehabilitation of our new headquarters and a host of other tasks necessary to a vital and growing organization bringing history alive in our communities.

For more information, call the museum @ 929-1684 to leave a message or request and a dedicated volunteer will return your call within the week; or contact Jan Hill, President @ 929-8895. Visit the website for more information and to order special sales items of interest: www.buxtonhollishistorical.org



Old Buxton Town Hall

(Formerly located at the intersection of Route 22 and Groveville Road to the left of the Buxton Centre Baptist Church)

At the March 6, 1871 annual Town Meeting, the residents of Buxton voted to build a new Town Hall in the same location of the original Town Hall. The 1 1/2 story building above, constructed by D.B. Hill and A. K. P. Meserve, was erected that same year at a cost of \$2,300. After the stove pipe, paint and office furniture were added, the total cost to the town was \$2,444.32. Annual Town Meetings were held at this building until 1952, when meetings were moved next door to the Hanson School gymnasium built that year.

Several years after town government moved to the new municipal center on Portland Road, part of the Old Town Hall building was leased to the *Buxton Historical Society* (door on left). Space was also shared with the Town's Food Pantry (door on right) for a number of years. Several other citizen organizations, including the Girl Scouts, were also able to use the space.

In July 2007, this historic old Town Hall was demolished by the Town of Buxton after the first floor ceiling fell in, following a very strong wind storm, and sufficient local support could not be built to pay for the repairs.



Buxton Powder House

(The Powder House is located on the west side of Route 22 in Buxton Center)

On the *National Register for Historic Places*, the Buxton Powder House was built in the middle of a centrally located field at Buxton Center in 1813 for the Town of Buxton to store ammunition and arms during the War or 1812 (1812-1814). The specifications of the building were that it was to be “10’ square, 1’ 1” thick and was to be made of the best bricks and lime and it had to have a good brick floor and shelves to store ammunition and kettles”. The specifications also required that it be arched over with bricks and have a well boarded and shingled roof with two doors, stout hinges and locks and be built 6’ high where the arch of the roof begins. We are not sure why the structure has only one door today.

Built by the lowest bidder, Theodore Elwell, the Powder House was erected at a cost of \$59. The job was completed in the fall and in the following spring (1814), the Town's stock of powder, lead balls, flints and camp kettles were moved into the building from Committeeman Wentworth’s house on Haines Meadow Road.

The Old Powder House still stands and we are reminded of its original purpose to preserve, protect and defend both in war and in peace. The brick floor has been replaced by a wood floor, the original rooster weather vane and subsequent replacements are missing and the building is in process of repair.



N. C. Watson School

(Located at Buxton Center on Groveville Road behind the Buxton Centre Baptist Church)

In the fall of 1900 at a cost of \$600, the N.C. Watson School was built on the Gillette Road in the village of Chicopee in Buxton, adjacent to the site of the first school made of brick, which was condemned for sanitary reasons and demolished in the spring 1900. This new wooden school was named the N.C. Watson School after the father of Miss Tabitha Watson. Miss Watson agreed to donate \$50 to the Town towards its construction, if the Town would name the building after her father.

1872, the York County Atlas showed 17 School Districts in Buxton and this wooden school replaced the original District 6 brick school in the Chicopee area. The N.C. Watson School is Buxton's only restored one room school house. Two other one-room district school buildings have been converted to other uses. (See the West Buxton Library on Route 112 in West Buxton and Hegerty Plumbing on Route 202.)

In 2003, the *Buxton-Hollis Historical Society* moved this endangered wooden structure to its present location in Buxton Center behind the Buxton Centre Baptist Church. The Society operates and maintains the school museum which is open at regular hours from May to October, offering tours and educational programs to the public, providing an opportunity to experience life at the turn of the 20th century in a one-room school. FMI, or to schedule a tour or program, contact 929-2141.



Elden Store

(Located at the intersection of Route 22 and Haines Meadow Road in Buxton Center)

Built in 1802, this *National Historic Register* brick building was originally constructed as a general store and post office run by the Elden family. It is the oldest commercial building in Buxton, sitting at what became known as Elden's Corner. During the 1800's, Buxton Center was the industrial hub of the Town.

Samuel D. Hanson purchased the building in 1852 and became Buxton's major industrialist, using this building as a distribution, manufacturing and packing facility for his Hanson Coat Shop which flourished before, during and after the Civil War. Hanson Coat Shop employed many people in the area, with as many as 1200 piece workers sewing coats in their homes.

Hanson Coat Shop was close to the railroad depot on what is now Route 22, so fabric could be conveniently imported and finished coats could easily be exported.

In the early 1940's, the Elden Store building was purchased by the Town of Buxton for agricultural education and was later turned over to School Administrative District #6 at its formation. By the early 1970's, the building was returned to the Town by the School District for historical purposes. It housed the Town's first Dispatch Center and later a doctor's office. The second floor was first leased to the then newly formed Buxton-Hollis Historical Society. The Society continues to assist the Town in identifying restoration and rehabilitation needs and in writing grants to help pay for improvements to the building and grounds.

Today, the basement of Elden Store is used as the headquarters for the Town's Emergency Management Agency and the Buxton-Hollis Historical Society continues to lease the second floor, allowing cub scouts and other groups to also use the space. The Society has applied for and received two grants from *Narragansett Number One Foundation* to continue the work to rehabilitate the building and grounds.

The building still looks very similar to photos taken 150 years ago, although the landscape has changed because of road construction and the addition of a usable basement. It now sits in the middle of what has been called by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission "a small potential historic district" at Buxton Center. More research is being done by the Buxton-Hollis Historical Society to determine other remaining buildings still standing to include in this important potential Buxton Center Historic District.



Memorial Fountain

(Located in Bar Mills Village at the intersection of Route 4A and Fountain Street.)

The Memorial Fountain was designed by John Calvin Stevens, Portland's most famous architect. It was completed and donated in 1894 to honor the Rev. Paul Coffin, who in 1763 was Buxton's first minister, and his grandson, Cyrus Woodman. Coffin is credited with naming the town Buxton at its incorporation in 1772 for unknown reasons, although there have been various incorrect theories proposed.

Cyrus Woodman was born in Buxton at the *Snell Wingate House* at 53 Groveville Road and grew up in the *Deacon Thomas Bradbury* house at 236 Haines Meadow Road. He was a partner of the famous real estate developer Cadwallader Washburn in Galena, Illinois and contributed to the publication of Goodwin's "Records of the Proprietors of Narraganset Township No. 1, Now Buxton, Maine"; both the *1800 and 1852 Samuel Dennett Maps of Buxton*; a publication of the Paul Coffin Sermons, a genealogy of the Woodman family. He also established the *Buxton Scholarship Fund* at Bowdoin College. The Woodman family donated the Woodman Reservation land at Pleasant Point Park for public use.



Berry Memorial Library

(Located at 93 Main Street, Route 4A in Bar Mills, opposite the Eliza Libby School)

The Berry Memorial Library was made possible by the generosity of Andrew L. and Susan A. Berry in memory of Mr. Berry's father, Stephen H. Berry in March of 1926.

In correspondence to the Selectmen of Buxton, it was requested that steps be taken to accept or reject the proposal made in the will of Mr. Berry. At a Special Town Meeting held August 28, 1926, it was voted to accept the bequest as offered. A Quit Claim Deed by Kate E. Came dated November 12, 1926 conveyed the property to the Town of Buxton.

Records indicate that in 1929 the Committee overseeing the construction of the Berry Library turned over to the Town "a building of pleasing exterior and harmonious furnishings that the citizens may be proud to own". The Berry Library officially opened January 5, 1929 for distribution of books with Fannie E. Towle as Librarian. Trustees continue to oversee the day-to-day operation of the Library.

The Library offers historical and current books, as well as internet access. It is open on Tuesday from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M.; Thursday from 4 – 8 P.M.; and Saturday from 9 – 11 A.M. Go to www.berrylibrary.com for more information or contact Claudine Emerson, Library Director, at 929-5484.



West Buxton Library

(Located on Route 112, West Buxton (Moderation Village))

The West Buxton Public Library traces its beginnings back to 1925 when it was organized in the West Buxton Baptist Church on the hill on River Road by the dam. Its longtime librarian was Gertrude Elwell. The Masonic Building, also on River Road in West Buxton, was its second home until 1953 when service to the community went dormant. The library came out of its five-year dormancy in 1958 when it found its new and current home in the former District #12 Schoolhouse (circa 1853). The library has benefited for most of its history from the financial support of the Towns of Buxton and Hollis. These annual appropriations have been supplemented by book and bake sales, memorial gifts, miscellaneous gifts, many monetary donations and collections.

The Saco River Flood of 1936 caused extensive water damage to the building. It wasn't until 1991 that the sills and entire flooring of the library was able to be replaced. Later that same year, the Maine Army National Guard replaced damaged walls and made other needed repairs including a handicap ramp. A new roof was installed. A new bathroom was installed in 1999 after a well was drilled and septic system constructed. The library grounds feature an Edith V. Wright Memorial Garden.

Improvements are constantly being made to make the library a warm and inviting place to study, read, access the internet, borrow books and audio/video media, have access to the Portland Public Library interlibrary loan system. Free coffee/tea are offered on Saturday mornings. There is an inviting, comfortable reading area that can be enjoyed in the evenings or on Saturday morning. Cribbage and Scrabble boards are available.

Carrie Redlon's Reading Room has a donated rocking chair and rolling cart being used for board books and audio/video materials. There are many new books and audio books for the children.

The library is staffed by dedicated volunteers who are knowledgeable and will aid the patrons with their needs. All visitors are welcome to the Library. Monthly events are held throughout the year and the public is always invited. Come visit your local one-room schoolhouse library, borrow a book and read!



Hanson School

(Located on Route 22 in Buxton Center)

A major milestone in Maine education came from a Maine Legislative law in 1888 requiring towns to provide a free high school. At that time, the Town of Buxton voted to raise the roof of the North Grammar School at Buxton Center (South corner of Route 22 and Groveville Road) to put the high school on the second floor, where it remained until 1913, when a new Buxton High School was built on the current Hanson School site. This second Buxton High School was renamed *Samuel D. Hanson High School* in 1917 after a generous donation of \$500 from Samuel's brother, Dr. Zenas Hanson. Samuel, Buxton's first major industrialist, owned and operated the Hanson Coat Shop, in what is now the National Register Elden Store building diagonally across and down the hill from the present Hanson school.

The Town of Buxton experienced a great loss when the Town's second high school, the Samuel D. Hanson High School, burned on March 19, 1930. Fortunate in having \$15,000 insurance on the building, the Town voted to borrow an additional \$11,000 at the height of the Great Depression to rebuild the school on the same foundation. Amazingly, by December of 1930, to rebuild the school, students were back at their desks in the Town's third high school, the newly rebuilt Samuel D. Hanson School shown above.

To save several thousand dollars, this high school building was constructed by local crews of day laborers, not by contract, in just eight months. Familiar family names of Buxton citizens today are on the list of workers. A gym annex was added in 1952.

In May of 2011, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission wrote the opinion that the Hanson School is considered a contributing resource within a small National Register eligible historic district in Buxton Center.



Royal Brewster Mansion

(Located at the intersection of Brewster Place, Rt. 112 and Route 202 at Tory Hill)

On June 5, 1975, the "Dr. Royal Brewster Mansion" was added to the *Register of National Historic Landmarks*. The house was completed in 1805 for Dr. Royal Brewster, who served Buxton for many years as a respected and beloved physician. The house is the craftsmanship of master builder Captain Joseph Woodman.

Dr. Brewster's brother, John Brewster, Jr., (1766-1854), one of the most prominent early American portrait painters, (See *A Deaf Artist in Early America The Worlds of John Brewster Jr.* by Harlan Lane), lived at the residence and owned it for a time after his brother's death, saving it for his brother's widow, the former Dorcas Coffin, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Paul Coffin.

The Brewster Barn and beautifully landscaped grounds have been opened annually by the present owners for the Dorcas Fair in July. Events and public tours of the beautifully rehabilitated house have been held periodically.



Rogers Fibre Mill

(A marker and foundation remain on the location at Depot Street on the Saco River in Bar Mills)

Originally at this site sometime prior to 1868, there was a chamber furniture factory which burned. A new furniture factory was built in 1881 and it, too, burned in 1907. In 1917, the Roger's Fibre Mill was constructed on the site on a concrete foundation and with post and beam timbers. During the height of its operation, Rogers Fibre employed nearly 100 people.

The Mill manufactured fibre board which had many uses, including shoe counters and innersoles. The building sat above the Saco River with a water sluice way flowing through a portion of the mill to turn wheels and belt driven machines. In 2003, the Town took possession of the property as part of a Superfund cleanup of the site.

The site is now a lovely piece of open land next to the Saco River with a monument dedicated to those who worked there.

Prints of a beautiful watercolor rendition of *Roger's Fibre Mill* by artist Bonita H. Doughty are available by contacting Richard F. and Beverly A. Atkinson of Buxton.



**World War I Memorial - The Bar Mills Memorial Bridge
With Soldiers Monument Honoring World War I Veterans in foreground**

(Route 4A, Bar Mills)

The actual World War I Memorial is this *bridge* over the Saco River connecting the Buxton and Hollis sides of the historic village of Bar Mills. The bronze Soldiers Monument commemorating World War I veterans from Buxton and Hollis is affixed to a boulder and is placed on the Buxton side of the Memorial Bridge.

The official dedication of the Memorial Bridge was held in May of 1938 and drew a crowd of 5,000. The bridge replaced one just a little upriver that was destroyed in the 1936 flood.

The Memorial Bridge has been evaluated for replacement by the State DOT (Department of Transportation). Estimated completion is in 2015. Current plans are for a new bridge just a few feet upriver. The stone and bronze monument will be relocated a few feet from its present Buxton side location.



Soldiers Monument Honoring World War II Veterans

(Corner of Long Plains Road (Route 22) and Groveville Road)

This stone and granite Soldiers' Monument was constructed in memory of Buxton's World War II veterans and appears just as it was when it was erected by the Town. The Town, fortunately, chose the existing monument instead of a wooden one for a little less money.

The Monument is a visible and attractive addition to the Buxton Centre Baptist Church lawn. Annually, members of the Buxton Garden Club decorate and tend this memorial monument and other Soldiers' Memorials throughout the Town.



Vietnam Memorial

(Located to the right front of the Buxton Municipal Center at 185 Portland Road, Buxton, Maine)

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated on September 23, 1995. This striking memorial honoring the men and women of Buxton who served in the Vietnam War, was proposed by George Hanna in 1994. Through his efforts and those of his sister, Joanne Vetro, funds were collected and a stone cutter was hired to fashion the memorial. The stone is a fitting memorial to those who answered the call to arms and is a meaningful and attractive addition to the Buxton Municipal Center.



Korean War Memorial

(Located at Groveville Center)

On November 11, 2006 a formal dedication ceremony took place to dedicate this Korean War Memorial honoring Veterans who served in the Korean War. The Memorial was made possible by the contributions of many citizens, veterans, friends and by a generous donation from the *Narragansett Number One Foundation*.

Collette Monuments of Lewiston custom designed the beautiful memorial from three jet-black granite stones. Each stone is seven feet high and weighs 4,000 pounds. The stones were imported from South Africa. Each stone is visible from every road at the Groveville Square intersection.



**First Congregational Church of Buxton at Tory Hill
(Tory Hill Meeting House)**

(Near the corner of Routes 112 and 202)

One of four *National Historic Register* buildings in Buxton outside the Salmon Falls East Historic District, the Tory Hill Meeting House was built in 1822 on the site of an earlier 1760 church. (The first Meeting House in Buxton was constructed in 1742 in Salmon Falls.)

The first minister in Buxton, Reverend Paul Coffin, never preached in the building, although he could hear its construction as he lay dying. The Tory Hill Meeting House is the site of the play, *The Old Peabody Pew*, written by Kate Douglas, which is usually performed annually there, in December.



New Home of the Buxton-Hollis Historical Society (2013)
SAD #6 District offices (1958-2011), Bar Mills Grammar School (1912-1957)
(100 Main St., Bar Mills)

After a lengthy two year negotiating process, on April 30, 2013, the Buxton-Hollis Historical Society entered into a lease agreement with SAD 6 to use this 100 year old historic structure for the society's headquarters, research library and museum store, in addition to assuming the building's rehabilitation and maintenance costs. This agreement was a win-win for the School District, the Historical Society and the communities of Buxton and Hollis. It has initiated an exciting period of growth for the historical society, marked by a notable increase in interest and donations of items for preservation and of fund raising support.

BHHS volunteers have carried on an aggressive schedule of building projects throughout the spring, summer and fall of 2013 to get the business office, research library and museum store operational, as well as to complete energy conservation improvements. More work is planned in 2014 to prepare museum space for the society's growing collection, which presently remains in storage, and to complete the first floor meeting room for use by the society and the public.

In 2012, the Bar Mills Grammar School was determined by the *Maine Preservation Commission* to be a contributing building to a potential historic district in Bar Mills.

It was the first consolidated (multi-classroom) school in the area, combining students from three one-room schools in Buxton together with students from one one-room school in Hollis: the *South Grammar School* at Tory Hill, the *Bar Mills Depot Street School*, the *Scribner School* on Rankin Road, and the *Bar Mills School in Hollis* (later the American Legion Hall). One-room schools typically combined grades 1-8 in one classroom. The Bar Mills Grammar School made it possible to place only two grades in each of the four large corner classrooms.

The building plan, provided by the State, was the most modern plan of the time. It was so popular that it was repeated in the second Buxton High School (1913-1930) which was built on the site of the present Hanson School building at Buxton Center.

By 1957, there were four classrooms with grades 1 to 4 in the Bar Mills Grammar School and, in that year, those classes were moved across the parking lot to the then newly constructed Bar Mills Elementary School, later named the Eliza Libby School.

About 1958, SAD 6 was formed and the building then became School District administrative offices until the fall of 2011. During this period of time, as the School District grew, the original large classrooms were divided into smaller rooms and two portable classrooms were added to the back of the building. On construction of the Buxton Center Elementary School, classroom space became available at the Eliza Libby School and SAD 6 administrative offices moved across the parking lot to the Eliza Libby School, leaving no school use for the historically significant 1912 grammar school building, which was in grave danger of demolition.