

BUXTON-HOLLIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INCORPORATED 1970 http://www.buxtonhollishistorical.org 207.929.1684

Saco River Telegraph & Telephone Company:

Connecting Buxton and Hollis With the Rest of the World

Industrial Age was booming in Buxton and Hollis when the visionary inventor Alexander Graham Bell made the first "telephone call" on March 10, 1876, with these not-so-memorable words to his assistant: "Mr. Watson, come here; I want to see you!" Actually the idea of transmitting sound music and speech - over various ingenious devices had been around for a couple of hundred years at that point, and the fact that Bell's patent was registered first was almost accidental resulting in a huge patent battle. When the dust settled, Samuel Shepard was ready to establish a regional telephone and telegraph office.

According to the "Acts and Resolves of the Sixty-fourth Legislature of the State of Maine" the Senate and House of Representatives "in Legislature assembled" passed "An Act to Incorporate the Saco River Telegraph and Telephone Company;" it was approved February 23, 1889. Besides Samuel Shepard, others named as the "body corporate" were Frank Southwick, Charles Towle, Edwin Palmer, Freeman Palmer, and George Lang.

This "Act of Incorporation" gave the company the right to "own, construct, maintain and operate, from some point in the city of Saco, a line or lines of telegraph and telephone, through the towns of Buxton, Hollis, and Standish, and terminating at a point in the town of Hollis, and also branch lines within the limits of Buxton and Hollis..." It further gave the corporation the right to locate its poles and lines "along and upon the highways, streets and bridges, as now traveled by the teams carrying the United States mail from Saco to Bonny Eagle

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Saeo River R. R. Station,	CALLS. 1 Long Ring.
C. A. Dennett, M. D. Biddefard, F. J. Leavitt, Hollis, S. B. Shepard, Groveville,	2 " " *** 3 " " *** 4 " " *** 5 " " ***
W. A. Shepard, Bar Mills, S. Messerve & Son, Martin Coffin, M. D. Buxton Center, S. Hanson &	
Clark's Mills. 3	
	Short I Long 1 Short " *** B. Shaparak, Suip l. ***
· ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **	**************************************

Saco River Telegraph & Telephone Company's first directory, 1894.

village," through the towns and along highways, streets, and bridges. They could cut down any trees within these limits in order to construct their lines, except "fruit, ornamental or shade trees..." (My thought as I read this: 'what other kinds of trees are there?"). Their capital stock was limited to ten thousand dollars, which in today's dollars would be worth about \$258,000.

Incorporation didn't save the company from many trials and tribulations, however. In 1921 there was a hearing before the Public Utilities Commission concerning the extension of one of the existing SRT&T lines. Mr. Charles Marble "and other complainants" alleged that they were unable to obtain telephone services even though they wanted the service.

The PUC hearing was held at the Bar Mills Grange Hall with a "considerable number of the residents of West Hollis and Bar Mills...present." The crux of the case was that there were eight potential subscribers who wanted the service, but the company felt that the proposed extension, at an estimated cost of \$1,337 for approximately 2.8 miles, was too expensive because of the limited number of

(Continued on page 9)



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

REDUCE, REUSE AND RECYCLE!

BHHS wants to be as green as we can be. Therefore, we are asking you to send your email address to our Membership Chair, Robin Randall–Milliken, if you are ready, willing, and able to receive your newsletter electronically rather than by paper and "snail mail." This would save BHHS money for postage and paper, and you'd also be promoting care and concern for our environment — a double winner.

Robin's email address is: rrandall@securespeed.us



Reminder!

All of our newsletters are available on our webpage at www.buxtonhollishistorical.org.

There's a lot of other interesting information there and we hope you will visit it often. We report the number of "hits" as part of our funding applications, too.

Visit Us on Social Media!

We may love history, but we're keeping up with the 21st century! Molly has been updating the Buxton-Hollis Historical Society Facebook page regularly. If you have a Facebook account, please go there to get the latest news and to 'like' and 'share' our page! You never know what tidbit Molly may have discovered! History in Hollis and Buxton is full of surprises, we find.

Buxton-Hollis Historical Society BHHS Newsletter Spring 2015

www. buxtonhollishistorical.org email: BHHS@buxtonhollishistorical.org

> P.O. Box 34 Buxton, ME 04093 100 Main Street, Bar Mills (207) 929-1684

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BHHS has established a Clynk returnable account with Hannaford! Do you have returnable bottles and cans you wish to donate? Stop by our headquarters to pick up a bag or two, fill the bag and bring it to Hannaford when you grocery shop. You can also donate money in your personal Clynk account. More information will be posted on our website and Facebook page shortly!

The Buxton-Hollis Historical Society Newsletter is published typically in the spring, summer and fall. The purpose of BHHS 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; securing and preserving articles, relics and records; and protecting such other objects as may be of importance to these towns.

Contributions to your newsletter and to BHHS may be submitted to us at the contact information provided in the newsletter heading

THE REVEREND PAUL COFFIN HAS COME HOME TO BUXTON

Many of you know that the portrait of the Reverend Paul Coffin, who was the first minister and a primary leader in the community of Buxton as it developed into a viable community, has returned. Painted by John Brewster, the well-known and respected deaf artist connected with the Brewster mansion, the portrait has been mysteriously missing for many, many years. This summer, however, the Thomaston Auction Galleries advertised that they had acquired the painting for one of their summer auctions. Sandy and Bev Atkinson, current occupants of the Brewster Mansion, were able to purchase the



painting and to return it to its rightful place.

The Reverend Paul Coffin (1738 - 1821)was pastor at South Congregational Church in Buxton (sometimes called Tory Hill) for 57 years. The artist, John Brewster, could neither hear no

speak, although he learned to use American Sign Language. He traveled around New England painting portraits for \$15.00 apiece. The painting of the Reverend Coffin is a little the worse for wear, but we know that now that he is back where he belongs in Buxton his condition has improved.



IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Do you have a Buxton Documentary DVD that isn't playing properly? If you do, be sure to return it to Saco River Community Television for exchange OR

you may return it to BHHS Headquarters during open hours Thursdays 4-8 P.M. and Saturdays 9 A.M.-Noon.

We have had a few returned and we want to be sure that your copy works flawlessly!

> We apologize for any inconvenience.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

reetings and Happy Spring!

After an incredibly snow piled winter, I hope this message finds you having weathered the storms with your heads having been kept above the snow drifts!

Thank you to the nine dedicated volunteers who did a fantastic spring cleaning of our new History Center in preparation for our opening on April 2nd. We all enjoyed a lunch of pizza, salad and yummy ginger snaps for

dessert!

Wheaton College student, Asa Rubin Crump, son of Miriam Rubin and grandson of Dr. Marvin and Joy Rubin of Buxton, received a grant over his 2014 Christmas vacation to volunteer for at least 50 hours. He received our gratitude, too, for painting the ceiling and walls and staining trim of a small room on the second floor of our history center! He did a great job and he told us he wants to come back this summer to do more! Yeah! Thank you, Asa!

Also, Eagle Scout Daniel Smith, son of Jim and Donna Smith of Buxton has begun work to complete his Eagle Scout project at BHHS, tackling another room on the second floor. In the spring, he and fellow Scouts will also be replacing the handicap ramp decking! Work is progressing very nicely! We are truly blessed by the energy and drive of these young volunteers and their parents!

Our first major museum display is well on its way to completion this year. Our goal is June 6! The room that it is to be housed in has been prepared and efforts are underway to organize, plan and focus the wealth of photos and relics we have collected on Bar Mills Village, both Buxton and Hollis sides of the Saco River. This is a huge undertaking and many thanks to past President Brent Hill and Curator Steven Atripaldi for their leadership on this

The N.C. Watson One-Room School Museum has a beautiful new sign, installed late last fall. The sign was designed by painter/contractor Anthony Taylor with assistance from members of the N. C. Watson School Committee. Bush hogging and cleaning up of the lot is scheduled on April 18 at 9:00 AM for any who would like to assist in beautifying the Museum grounds. Saved from demolition, the school which served the students of the Chicopee section of Buxton from 1900 to 1941, was moved to Buxton Center in 2004, where it was lovingly restored.

On May 2nd at 9 AM, a volunteer landscaping crew is needed to removed grass and then mulch around newly planted trees/shrubs at the Buxton's National Register Elden Store building at Buxton Center. A Narragansett Number One Foundation (NNOF) grant made the landscaping project possible. The basement of the brick building now houses Buxton's Emergency Management Agency (EMA).

Plans are underway to dedicate several memorial plantings at Elden on September 12 at 3:30 PM., followed by a dedication of the new sign at the N.C. Watson School across the road. From there, any who choose may drop into the regularly scheduled Buxton Centre Baptist Church Bean Supper from 4:30-6:00 PM. **If you would like to honor a loved one by donating a memorial tree or bush, please contact Jan Hill at 929-8895 or call our office at 929-1684 to leave a message.

Replacement of the Memorial Bridge in Bar Mills is scheduled to begin in 2015. Any of you who love this important historic structure may be interested in the beautiful prints of the bridge that we carry in our BHHS museum store. You will want to be sure to attend our annual meeting on November 7, too, as the DOT consultant's report is the fascinating topic.

We look forward to another busy and fulfilling year. Happy Spring to us all! Sunshine and flowers galore.

-Jan Hill, President

Upcoming Events 2015

Tuesday, April 14, 7 PM: "Genetic Genealogy ~ How, When, Where, and Why" with Nancy Milliken Mason, a genetic genealogist who has been doing genealogy research for more than thirty years. Explore genetic DNA testing to learn which test(s) would be more helpful with your research. Tests can prove or disprove a particular genealogical question. This specialized knowledge may uncover missing family lines and previously unknown relatives with whom you share a common ancestor. Genealogy is like a maze and often the search leads to dead ends and brick walls. Information from your newly discovered relatives can get you on to the right track as you share stories and photographs with one another. This is a rapidly growing field to assist with traditional genealogical research.

Suggested donations: \$10, Seniors \$8*

Tuesday, May 12, 7 PM: "It'll be Over by Christmas: Remembering World War I" Join area citizens in remembering Maine veterans in WWI with Lee Humiston, Director & Curator of the Maine Military Museum & Learning Center in South Portland. Uniforms, helmets, Yankee Division flag, documents and more. Come in your uniform, bring photos and memorabilia to share. Suggested donations: \$10, Seniors \$8*

Saturday, June 6, 9 AM to Noon: Bar Mills Exhibit OPENING (that's our goal, anyway--you may want to check in with us ahead of time, just to be sure!) Refreshments served.

Tuesday, June 16, 7 PM: "Brides Through History" with Carla Turner, President of the Dorcas Society of Hollis and Buxton. June is the month of brides and weddings. Enjoy this special informative talk on the history of weddings and wedding gowns. See excerpts from a unique wedding gown fashion show held 1997 in the Brewster Barn to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Dorcas Society. Several period wedding gowns also on display. You are invited to bring wedding photos of grandparents and others to display. Suggested donations: \$10, Seniors \$8*

Saturday, July 18, 9-3 PM: Join us at our sales/information table at the Dorcas Fair on the Tory Hill Church Common (First Congregational Church of Buxton). Also, check out our BHHS float in the parade. If you would like to help with the float or at the sales table, let us know. Leave a message on our office phone (929-1684) and someone will get back to you. Research Library and Museum closed for this event.

Saturday, July 25, 5 PM: Box Lunch Social Auction We thought we would mix things up a bit and try a change of time for this year's successful capital fundraiser! Come together again with old and new friends for this unique and fun packed evening. Pack your light supper in a decorated box or container. Be sure to attach a description of the meal you provide to be auctioned to the highest bidder. Once again auctioneer extraordinaire, Bruce A. Buxton, is back by popular demand. Period costumes fun, but optional. The venue is the same--the barn of the Royal Brewster Mansion at the corner of Rt. 202 and 112. It's a wonderful event--don't miss it! For more information and to reserve your seat, call Bev at 929-6495 or email ratkin5850@aol.com

Saturday, August 15, 8:30 AM to Noon: "Cruising Down the River!" Bring your kayak or canoe, a life jacket and your picnic lunch for a floating excursion down the glorious Saco River. We will be following the route of the stern-wheeler paddleboat named the Minnie Hah-Ha that carried passengers and lumber up and down the river from West Buxton to the Bar Mills Railroad Depot. The river journey will end with a picnic lunch. Stay tuned for more details!

Sunday, September 6: Join us at our BHHS "Hollis Fest" table (place and time to be announced)

Saturday, September 12, 3:30 PM: "Dedications at Buxton Center". Please join us in Buxton Center for the dedication of the newly completed landscape and memorial plantings at one of Buxton's most important historic National Register public buildings. Originally built to house Elden's Store and later the S.D. Hanson Coat Shop, this building was central to what was once Buxton's "industrial hub." It now serves as the home of Buxton's Emergency Management Agency (EMA). This project has been made possible by a grant from the Narragansett Number One Foundation and was led by the Buxton-Hollis Historical Society, with the assistance from the Town of Buxton. (Corner of Rt. 22 & Haines Meadow Rd).

Following the Elden Landscape dedication, we hope you will walk a short distance across Rt. 22 to join us in dedicating the beautiful new sign at the N.C. Watson One-Room School Museum (and check out the spruced up landscaping there as well!). Designed by neighbor Anthony Taylor with direction from the N. C. Watson Committee, this new sign was planned with longevity in mind. It was made possible by private and public donations. Following these short ceremonies, we suggest you consider rounding off your Buxton Center history experience by dropping in to the adjacent historic Buxton Center Baptist Church for their regularly scheduled bean supper held from 4:30 until 6! (** Note: If you would like to purchase a memorial planting for the Elden landscape project, please call 929-1684 to leave a message or contact Jan Hill at 929-8895.)

Tuesday, October 13, 7 PM: "Architectural Salvage" with Alice Dunn, owner of Portland Architectural Salvage. Many of our area's historic buildings are in danger of demolition, even though the tide is turning nationally towards rehabilitating and re-purposing. As with the train station in Portland, it may be too late for some of our National Register eligible rural treasures. Alice will discuss how elements of demolished structures are often re-used. We have asked her to discuss the challenges and advantages of re-purposing and to comment particularly on the old Odd Fellows Hall in West Buxton, which she purchased to save from demolition a few years ago.

Saturday, November 7, 5 PM: Annual Potluck Supper Meeting: "Bar Mills WWI Memorial Bridge" presented by history buff and past BHHS president, Brenton Hill. One of only three continuous truss bridges in Maine, it is scheduled for replacement in 2015-16. Important historically and in design, both in Maine and nationally, the Bar Mills Memorial bridge was built to commemorate Buxton and Hollis veterans and their contributions in WWI (2014 to 2018), the greatest war of the first quarter of the twentieth century. Over 5000 people attended its dedication. This program takes us through the three Bar Mills bridges from 1824 to date and will cover the consultants' report to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. It includes many rare photos and maps and was completed with significant contributions by your historical society. You won't want to miss this informative program! To reserve your seat please contact Bertie Ramsdell 929-4529.

Suggested donations: \$10, Seniors \$8

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

All Over by Christmas: World War One

n June 28, 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir presumptive to the throne of Austro-Hungary, and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg, were assassinated by a Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip. The objective of the group he represented, called the "Black Hand," was to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire and to consolidate the Slavic states that had been absorbed by the Austro-Hungary Empire back into one country, Yugoslavia. Initially everyone considered the incident a little flare-up that would be over by Christmas.

Unfortunately, this prediction was optimistic. Although the United States didn't enter the War – now called "The War to End All Wars" – until 1917, the Americans played an enormous role in bringing the war to a close. This success came with great sacrifice at home, and Maine was no exception. The Buxton-Hollis Historical Society is recognizing this war, which radically challenged the social order, in several different venues.

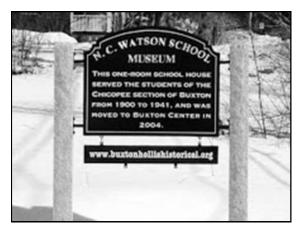
Our May program with Mr. Humiston, of the Maine Military Museum and Learning Center, will introduce us to US military history and some of the tangible paraphernalia relating to it. We hope that those of you who have memorabilia, including letters and pictures, from World War One will share them with us that evening.

Memorial Bridge was constructed after the old bridge was washed out by the 1936 floods. The towns decided to dedicate the new bridge to the veterans who served in World War One. The demolition of that bridge in order to make way for a new one will begin soon in 2015. We will commemorate the old bridge and all it stood for at our Annual Meeting in November. Again, we hope you will share with us your stories and artifacts about the bridge and about the brave veterans whom it memorializes. You may want to visit the following website to read more detail about Memorial Bridge's historical importance and a recommended alternative to demolition/rebuilding:

http://www.historicbridges.org/bridges/browser/bridgebrowser=maine/barmills/



N.C. Watson School Museum



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







The Board of Directors has approved that all current members of BHHS may benefit from a discount of 10% on our gift store items!

Be sure to drop in to look at the lovely things that are available.

All proceeds help us to maintain and to operate our History Center.

Buxton-Hollis Historical Society History Center 100 Main Street (Route 4A), Bar Mills, Buxton, Maine

Open Thursdays 4:00—8:00 PM Saturdays 9:00—12:00 AM Except holiday weekends

For more information, to schedule a group, or to make an appointment outside posted times, please leave a message for call-back:

(207) 929-1684

website: http://www.buxtonhollishistorical.org

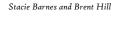
Martha Stewart's Spring Cleaning Tips

- Wipe walls and ceilings
- ◆ Vacuum and shampoo rugs
- Clean upholstered furnishings
- Dust thoroughly
- Ensure fire safety (check fire alarm batteries)

- Dust books and shelves
- Wipe and wax wooden furniture
- Clean window treatments (thank goodness, she didn't say "wash all the windows!")
- Organize files
- ◆ Clean computer



Back row: Robin Randall-Milliken, Nancy Pierce Middle row: Janice Lane, Beth Plummer, Diane Longley Front row: Barry Plummer, Jan Hill, Brent Hill (holding Axel) photographer: Stacie Barnes













Janice Lane, Diane Longley, Nancy Pierce

xel was right on top of everything, checking the list and barking it twice, inspecting with a sure sniff, licking clean bits and pieces of food that might otherwise have gone unnoticed, and generally dogging everyone to assure that they were doing it right. We are fortunate with all of our volunteers, but it is reassuring to know that somedog is in charge of the details.

Elden Store

Then





Now

- Remember: volunteers are needed on May 2nd to finish landscaping.
- You may wish to donate a memorial shrub or tree: if you do, please call 929-1684 to leave a message or contact Jan Hill at 929-8895.
- Dedication of Memorial Plantings will be September 12 at 3:30 PM, followed by the dedication of the new N.C. Watson School sign.

Renovations to the Buxton-Hollis History Center

gain, we have been incredibly fortunate to have many volunteers helping us to renovate and maintain our beautiful building. The downstairs is finished and now we have moved upstairs to prepare our primary exhibit area. The large classroom on the second floor looks beautiful; that is the space where we plan to house the rotating village exhibits. Jan Hill, super painter, patched, stained, and painted the walls and ceilings last fall. Over the winter, Jan, with Betsy Clay's assistance, made beautiful window treatments for all of those windows. Barry Plummer, our go-to guy, also repaired, enlarged, and built, along with Rob Roy, the new interior handicapped entrance and ramp. This spring Barry replaced the toilet and fixed the sink plumbing in the second floor bathroom.

Wheaton College student Asa Rubin Crump, who applied for and received a grant to volunteer for 50 hours or more over his Christmas vacation, is shown below, painting. Eagle Scout Daniel Smith and his supporters will be replacing the decking of the outside ramp if the snow ever melts. In the meantime, Eagle Scouts continued working on the upstairs rooms. Walls and ceilings need to be repaired, patched, and painted. All our volunteers have produced some handsome spaces, with more in progress!











(Continued from page 1)

customers. The company had offered to build the extended line, however, if the potential customers offset the initial expense by each contributing \$60.00 towards building it.

The PUC did not consider this proposition "unreasonable." However, the members of the commission did find that it would create "a very decided burden" on the potential subscribers if they were required to pay the extra charge or, alternatively, to be deprived of telephone service.

As a compromise the PUC required Saco River Telephone accept volunteer labor to clear the land, to dig the holes and to provide transport for materials in lieu of the cash payment as a means to contribute to the cost of building the extension. The Commission decision found that this substitution would be "a far less burden to them than a cash contribution." However, the company would not be required to extend the lines unless all eight of the potential customers agreed in writing to subscribe to the telephone services. The "treasurer and manager of the company" expressed her opinion that "any contribution of labor and material, other than cash, would not be very satisfactory."

This "treasurer and manager" was Mary Bell Shepard, who had succeeded her Uncle Sam as chief executive in 1907. During her tenure, the Saco River Telegraph & Telephone went through good



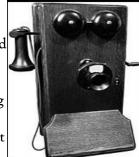
times and bad –
including the
Depression; the 1936
flood, which drove the
operators to the second
floor in rowboats; and
the destruction of miles
of poles and lines by the
1947 forest fires. Some
have described her as
"strong-willed," and she
must have been so,
because in spite of these
disasters, the company
moved forward.

The switchboard, which had first been installed in Bar Mills in 1900-01, was replaced by dial service

in 1956. It was the end of hand-cranked telephones and the pleasant operators' voice saying "number please." Mary B. Shepard died at about that time and control of the company was returned to Samuel B. Shepard, who managed it until he, too, died in 1960 at the age of one hundred and two years.

There were about thirty years left for the company to adapt to the changing world of communications under the management of the Carroll family and others. Sometimes it had to catch up with its counterparts in more urban areas. I can remember the old hand-cranked phone at my

grandmother's house, and how I loved it when she let me speak to that nice lady who said "number please." I guess it is progress, but sometimes I watch the young people texting and using the internet and all those other abilities that "smart phones" are equipped with



these days (a young man who visited me recently even had a flashlight in his), and I long to crank the phone, to hear a disembodied voice chime out "number please," and to say "one-ring-three, please" just one more time.



~~Meg Gardner

3 Stonewall Crossing Buxton, ME 04093	Buxton, Maine 04093
Robin Randall-Milliken, Membership Chair	P.O. Box 34
:01 puəs puv	Mailing Address:
Buxton-Hollis Historical Society	BAR MILLS, BUXTON, MAINE 04093
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BUXTON-HOLLIS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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