



11 Captain Bill Road PO Box 212 Hancock, Maine 04640

# **NEWSLETTER**

## **FALL-WINTER 2022**

### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

For our final program for the season, VP, David Johnston, demonstrated how we can offer multi-media events. Old vinyl records were played. An interview of local and summer people about fresh and saltwater fishing taped by Sandy Phippen brought back the voices and memories of Maynard Foss, Hebert Johnston, Clayton Pomroy, Lois Johnson and others. A Century of Summers, viewed on the large screen TV, provided us with faces and voices of many past and present Hancock people.

We added the name of Georgie (Lounder) Haskins to the board. Georgie served as an officer many years ago. We are excited to welcome Georgie back.

Clint and Eleanor Ritchie brought a letter to the museum sent to the late Mrs. Jane G. Heyward from the late Fran Mottram. In her letter Fran tells Mrs. Heyward about getting lost for 2 days in the woods and trails around Schoodic Mt. Except for this letter, Fran's misadventure would not be known or remembered. To read the entire story and a delightful poem about Fran's reason for missing a bell choir practice, stop by the museum this spring or summer and check the file for Fran Mottram.

Thank you to Lisa Heyward and Clint and Eleanor.

Myrna Coffin, President



Joe Ferrannini hard at work at Riverside Cemetery

## **DO THE GRAVESTONES TALK TO US???**

By Bob Foss

This past summer the Riverside Cemetery in Hancock Maine hired Conservator Joe Ferrannini of “Grave Stone Matters” to perform some restoration work. This beautiful cemetery located on the shore of Taunton Bay is the final resting place for many of our Hancock ancestors. The cemetery has been very well looked after by the citizens of our town for many years. We owe our sincere thanks to the generations of Riverside volunteer officers and sextons such as Ivory Foss, Earl Johnston, and now the leadership of Dennis and Linda King with Tommy Johnston as Sexton who have kept this sanctuary looking so nice for us to visit and remember those who came before us. However, as in the case of all old cemeteries that have faced centuries of Maine weather, there are quite a number of monuments that are broken, illegible and in need of some tender loving professional repair.

The Foss family also hired Joe to restore a remote old family plot. This was scheduled to be done immediately after the Riverside work. The work at Riverside proceeded very smoothly. We actually ended up somewhat ahead of schedule and had completed all of the planned work early. Much of this was due to the excellent volunteer help of several individuals including our president Myrna Coffin and board members Alan Gray, and Jean Foss. So, with a little time remaining we looked around for an additional job. A large broken and tipped over marble gravestone was selected that was some distance away from our initial worksite. When Joe began work on this large gravestone, we noticed a smaller marble stone next to it that was badly broken, mostly buried and illegible. We had all our equipment close by so Joe said that if I would excavate and clean it,

that he would include it in the restoration work. It was really an afterthought on a hot August day and nearly didn't happen but --what the heck let's do it.

Once it was unearthed and repaired the name on it could be read for the first time in many decades. "*George Lee*" who had died at a young age in 1833. I had no knowledge of a Lee family in Hancock and went home that evening without giving it another thought.

Now for the incredible part of this story. The next morning when we arrived at the work site, Joe informed me that he had done some research on George Lee during the evening. (I have no idea why he picked this stone to research among all the ones we had worked on)

He proceeded to read a newspaper article to me that was published in 1833 concerning a tragic accident about two young men who had drowned while working at a saw mill located on a river flowing into Tunk Lake. George Lee had perished by drowning as he was attempting to rescue a co-worker who had fallen into the raging river while moving logs.

This co-worker was "*Alvin Foss*" (One of my ancestors)!!

Well, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up as I realized that as amazing as this apparent coincidence is ----that what I was about to tell Joe would make this story truly extraordinary.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, the Foss family had hired Joe to work on our remote family plot after we finished at Riverside. One of the gravestones we planned to work on the very next day was none other than that of Alvin Foss! This stone has the same date of death as George Lee's and is engraved "Drowned at Tunk Lake". I certainly had never heard of George Lee or anything about the accident that claimed both lives in 1833.

Joe and I were silent for a few moments contemplating what had just happened. We had no intention of working on George Lee's gravestone, it was illegible, mostly buried, and at the last minute we had decided to include it in our work. It wasn't even close to our original planned work site. That evening for some unknown reason Joe chose to research this stone versus all of the others we had worked on and it ended up being directly related to the death of one of my ancestors -----

"Whose gravestone we were planning to work on the very next day!!!

How is it possible that the history of the relationship of these two individuals has surfaced in such a dramatic fashion after nearly 200 years? How appropriate is it that both monuments were restored during this project to tell their tragic story? How does George Lee's stone (1833) reach out to connect with Alvin's distant monument by telling his story to a member of the Foss family in 2022? The hairs on my neck are standing up again as I am writing this. Maybe just an impossible coincidence? Or truly a message from our ancestors?

Or perhaps as Joe said quietly to me as we were standing by George's now repaired and erect monument.

**“Sometimes the Stones Just Talk to Me.”**

Riverside is hiring Joe to come back again next year. I met Joe a few years ago when he was teaching a workshop on gravestone restoration that was sponsored by MOCA (Maine Old Cemetery Association) and was very impressed by his knowledge and skills. You never can tell what amazing stories will surface when doing this restoration work. Some of us get a great deal of satisfaction knowing that our work is a great way to remember and show respect for those who preceded us. We always welcome volunteer help. If you would like more information on supporting this work contact Bob @ [azbfjf@yahoo.com](mailto:azbfjf@yahoo.com).



Stones of Alvin Foss (left) & George Lee (below)



## Lois C. Johnson Historical Museum Curator's Report

Fall 2022

We had a successful 2022 season beginning with opening on June 1<sup>st</sup>. This year we expanded our hours to include Saturday afternoons with several board members taking shifts throughout the summer. Perhaps in another year we can be open one evening a week at least during the peak summer months.

The theme for displays this summer was Mount Desert Ferry and the railroads that connected passengers to the ferry to Bar Harbor. Thanks to Alan Gray we had a beautifully crafted diorama of Mount Desert Ferry as it looked in its heyday. The diorama was on loan from Penobscot Marine Museum where Alan volunteers.

Marcus Clemons created several slide shows of photograph in the collection that ran on the big screen television in the museum during open hours. Visitors enjoyed the photos some labeled while others were mystery photos.

Bob Foss uploaded several of his digitized letters from the Foss family sea captains to the computer in the audio video area for the use of researchers. Thank you, Bob for so generously sharing your family's history with future generations.

More of the oral history CDs were delivered to the museum this summer and will be cataloged over the winter. They will be available next summer for people to listen to.

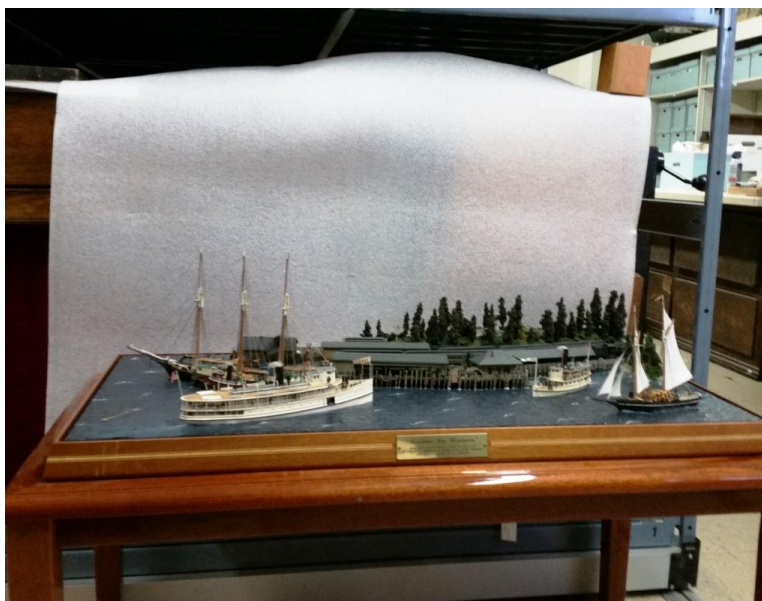
We were not ready to have the planned art displays this summer but have the promise of a show next spring already. The appropriate policies will be written over the winter.

On a personal note, I would like to thank everyone for their support this summer as I was pulled in other directions by my temporary position at the helm of the Ellsworth Library. You were all great about helping out in the museum and with programs and forgiving me for missing programs because of other obligations. You are a wonderful group to work with!

We are looking for a theme for next summer's displays. Does anyone have a collection relating to Hancock History they would like to share? Does anyone have any ideas they would share? We welcome all suggestions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charlene Clemons, Curator

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Our thanks to Penobscot Marine Museum in Searsport for the loan of the Mount Desert Ferry diorama enjoyed by our visitors this season. Cipperly Good, Curator, Karen Smith, Museum Director, Jon Johansen, Museum Board President worked with our own Board Member Alan Gray to facilitate the loan. It seems as if every person who looked at it found a different detail, from deer in the woods, to smoke from the boats smokestacks. A remarkable work of art.

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## Ice Harvesting – a Winter Tradition

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century tens of thousands of workers were employed in the ice harvesting industry in New England alone. Large blocks of ice were cut from frozen rivers, lakes and ponds. Either floated on a stream or hauled by horses to an ice house, the blocks were then stored in sawdust and shipped around the world. Before the advent of electric refrigerators, having access to ice year round changed the way people kept their food and ate.



**Typical ice saw**

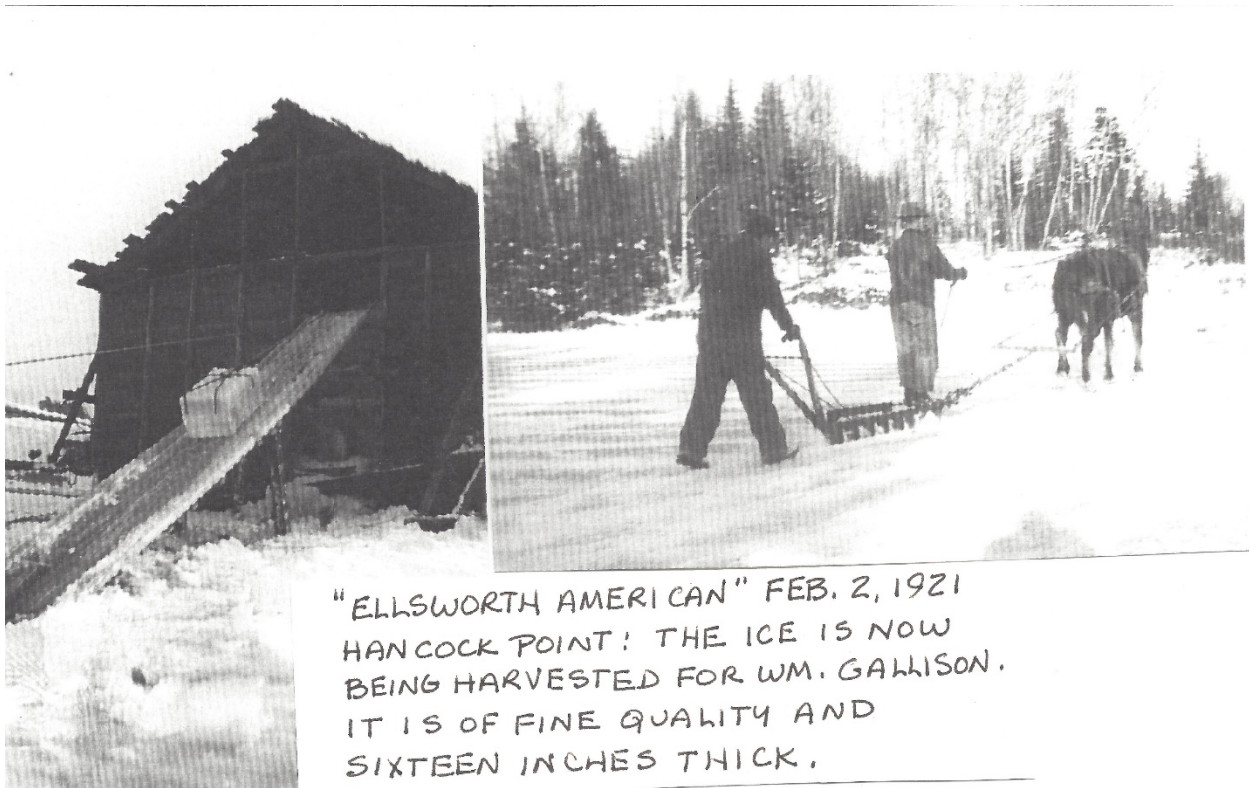
Even into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century iceboxes, like the one below, were still in use in many parts of Maine. Ice delivery trucks brought a block of ice each week, the driver carrying the heavy blocks into the houses with large tongs. During the week the lady of the house had to empty the water from the melting ice.



**Ice went into the compartment on the upper right, water drained to the lower compartment. Food was kept cold in the left compartment.**



Ice Harvesting at William Gallison's 1921



"ELLSWORTH AMERICAN" FEB. 2, 1921  
HANCOCK POINT! THE ICE IS NOW  
BEING HARVESTED FOR WM. GALLISON.  
IT IS OF FINE QUALITY AND  
SIXTEEN INCHES THICK.

Photos from Roberta Gallison Cunningham. See the complete set at the museum.

## 2021-2022 Financial Update

The Hancock Historical Society is in very sound financial shape. Our fiscal year runs from October 1<sup>st</sup> to September 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. Here is a summary of our activity. Total funds available stayed virtually the same, year to year, at \$67,267.25.

Expenses stayed just under our projected budget. We spent about \$3,000 on improvements to the museum, items for resale and speakers for meetings. It cost \$3,400 to maintain and heat the museum and \$1,700 for insurance. Giving us a total expenditure of \$8,181.55.

Income for the year totaled \$7,899.11. Donations came in at \$3,695. We are grateful that the town gave us \$3,000 and has agreed to put us on the warrant every year without having to collect signatures. The clynk bags brought in \$632 and the raffle generated \$450. Thanks to all who participated. Sales from our expanded offerings yielded \$965. Membership raised \$3,475 with 10 new life members, 65 annual members and 4 business memberships. Unfortunately, due to the downturn in the stock market, our endowment fund lost about 20% or \$4,318. This left us with total income of \$7,899 and a small loss of \$282.55.

Looking ahead, we adopted a budget very similar to last year's except that we realized that there is approximately \$10,000 left over from the building fund. We are looking into how to use this to make improvements to our museum.

If anyone would like more complete figures, please let me know, Don Parker, Treasurer

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