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Wabanaki Voices: Connecting Past, Present, Future

History House founder, Louise Helen Coburn, published *Skowhegan on the Kennebec* in 1941. In it, she noted that “Long before the eyes of any white man had rested upon Skowhegan Falls in the Kennebec, the place was familiar to the Abenaki Indians. Their canoes ran between shores that are part of our town and their feet trod the trail across Skowhegan Island. They speared for salmon at the Falls and raised corn in the intervals…”

These indigenous people lived in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, the Maritimes and Quebec for at least 13,000 years prior to the seventeenth century arrival of Europeans who came to live in Wabanaki territory year-round. The Abenaki tribe was a member of the Waponahki Confederation, which also included the Mi’kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquodd, and Penobscot tribes. Today the Abenaki are scattered off-reservation across Canada, Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire. Some have joined one of the four Maine federally recognized sovereign Indian tribes - Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquodd, or Penobscot. The Wabanaki are known as “People of the Dawnland”.

Fast forward to 2019. This part of our town’s history has not been addressed by History House and it is now time to do so. We plan to partner with other local organizations to create and promote a *Wabanaki Voices: Connecting Past, Present, Future* exhibit. It will be curated by an ad hoc committee that includes History House Board, community members, and Wabanaki consultants.

Our goal for the *Wabanaki Voices: Connecting Past, Present, Future* exhibit is to offer our communities an opportunity to gain a wider understanding of our first residents and their descendants. It will feature an authentic view of Native Americans’ territory, culture, language-connected-to-geographic-place, oral history, and art. The on/off site programs will include speaker events, children’s programming, and a Native Peoples themed book club. Displays will include a 10’ wigwam, maps, photos, tools, artifacts, video presentations, and signage. Some high school students will help build the wigwam.

*This undated image is from the Huff glass negative collections.*
The Heirloom Gardens

History House had an interesting and mostly successful garden season. However, a wet spring meant delays working in the gardens. We dealt with a back lawn needing substantial repair due to heavy equipment damage sustained during last fall’s installation of the south-side French drain system. We also dealt with weeds overtaking the newly seeded lawn areas! Fortunately we had our lawn back by midsummer. We appreciate and thank all of Lynch Landscaping’s efforts to repair and restore our lawn.

We lost one of our border garden’s Pee Gee Hydrangea trees this summer – due to ground-level girding, probably by a rodent. We plan to replace it with the lovely Kiss Me Over the Garden Gate Kate (Polygonum orientale). First grown in the U.S. by Thomas Jefferson, it’s an annual heirloom plant that is incredibly fast growing. This old-timey cottage plant can reach over 6’ high and 5’ wide. Its many arching, multi-branching stems and fuchsia-pink, bead-like flower clusters provide movement, scent, a long bloom time, and food for pollinators. It will be a lovely addition to our Heirloom Garden family of plants. Ask us about our available seed.

In mid-October volunteers removed and divided perennial plant materials from the north-side History House gardens so that the second French drain system could be installed. Once completed, the garden beds were restored and plant materials, replanted. These French drain systems, along with a new dehumidifier, help keep water out of the History House basement and lower humidity levels.

Volunteers completed end-of-the-season garden and yard chores, such as weeding, picking up plant debris, pruning, and raking up leaves. However, some plant materials were left for visiting winter birds. The gardens are ready to welcome spring and early queen bumblebees!

We appreciate our volunteer gardeners for their ongoing efforts to care for History House gardens and lawns. A big thank you goes to Bill Plant for mowing our lawn and trimming our back lawn cedar ‘fence’. We also thank Chris Plant, Marty Kitchen, Marilyn Renfrew, Pat Burdick, and new volunteer, Joanne Moody - all of whom worked diligently to ensure our gardens are well maintained. These beautiful gardens would not be possible without their help.

We hope you’ll visit History House next season to enjoy our heirloom gardens, lovely lawns, the wonderful Kennebec river overlook with its signage depicting early Skowhegan river scenes, the Bateau exhibit, and the new Wabanaki wigwam exhibit.
My June-to-October Thursdays were mostly reserved for volunteering at the History House. 
I loved my mornings working in the Heirloom Gardens. We weeded, trimmed plant material, and as needed, did lawn and sidewalk edging. Many hands made for light work! Even though Elm Street is a highly traveled and noisy street, it was easy for me to block out the noise because of the beauty that surrounded me, the well maintained History House building, the Kennebec River, the many birds and butterflies, and the friendships that are made. Every week it seemed as if I saw new, unfolding, and beautifully colored flowers to admire! I did however seem to get right into the dirty parts of gardening. Usually after working three hours I needed to get cleaned up. So, I’d head home to another Elm Street - one that’s less traveled and quieter - in Mercer. 
After lunch and getting presentable, I’m back at History House to report to Curator Kim Wilson for another three hour volunteer session - this time, inside. Because I’m new, I needed to learn about everything assigned to me. My first lesson was how to put letters on the three Event Boards that advertise upcoming programs. It definitely was not as easy as Mariah, the Student Intern, made it look. My next assignment, which took time to master, was logging postcard data into a computer program. Then, there were the “Binders” - oh my, there are so many of them! I was asked to write summaries of newspaper clippings from WWI. It was slow work as the handwriting, sometimes hard to read, needed to be closely scrutinized to understand the information it offered so it could be logged into the database and available for future researchers. Three other volunteers shared this task before we finally got it completed. It was a “Yahoo!” moment when the last newspaper clipping was logged! My last learned skill this season was finishing the written index from one of the “Death and Birth” Binders - yet another ‘Yahoo!’ moment for me!
It’s been a pleasure to have Kim and Mariah teach me new skills! I appreciated the many volunteers I worked with - all of whom helped me feel that my extra hands were greatly appreciated. My Thursdays spent in the Heirloom Gardens and in History House offered interesting and enjoyable volunteer experiences.

**Thursdays with Marty** 

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**Ghost Hunting by Patti Baldwin**

“Who you gonna call” to investigate the History House’s alleged paranormal activity? Central Maine Ghost Hunters of course! Last July 19th members of our History House Board invited Renee, George, Heather, and Mike to try their high-tech ghost hunting equipment within our establishment. Curator Kim Wilson and I volunteered to join the team of Central Maine Ghost Hunters for a late evening of ghostly sleuthing. Please go to http://www.skowheganhistoryhouse.org, click on ‘About Us” for the rest of this spooky story.

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**History House is Looking for a Student Intern this Spring**

We have an opening for a 10 week position for either a local junior or senior high school student or a college freshman. We seek a student with an interest in local history, an ability to communicate well in a public setting and follow directions with minimal supervision, and who presents him/herself in a professional manner. The position involves assisting with special projects, data entry, and performing other duties required by the History House. The Student Intern expands our staffing level – but equally important, is given an opportunity to gain knowledge regarding the operation of a professional museum - as well as develop communication and teaching skills.

Seasonal, paid position: June – mid August: 22 hours/week (Tuesday – Friday)  
For more information contact: president@skowheganhistoryhouse.org

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Glass negatives were invented in the 1850’s - years before the digital or the film eras. The process involved applying photographic emulsions on pieces of glass, becoming commonly known as glass plate negatives. Photographers printed pictures from this type of negative.

Last fall Dale Watson, a loyal History House supporter, gave Mel Burnham, the former History House Director, 364 glass plate negatives as a donation to History House. These glass plate negatives were taken in Skowhegan by Huff Studios around the turn of the century. They contain images of juries, family life, family portraits, landscapes, still life images, waterscapes, buildings, and more.

The glass plate negatives, stored in three wooden boxes, were sorted by their glass size. Lynn Perry and Gretchen Clark, Collection Specialists, cleaned, scanned and wrapped each negative in an archival safe envelope and then secured the envelopes in waterproof boxes for long term storage. These glass originals are now safely housed and the fragile glass will no longer need to be handled, assuring long-term preservation. All of these historic images will be catalogued and available digitally through the Skowhegan History House website. (skowheganhistoryhouse.org)

Through the eye of a photographer, namely, Mr. Huff, we have a glimpse of the way life was lived in Skowhegan over a hundred years ago. We treasure these historical images and thank Dale Watson for his thoughtful donation.
Girl on 2 Ponies

Ross Plumbing + Heating and Bowman Hardware, Water Street

Bucknam’s Drug Store

Bijou, Billiards and Pool, Court and Water Streets

A Water Street Parade
The Skowhegan History House was awarded a $1,500 grant from the ME Expansion Arts Fund of the Maine Community Foundation. Two additional grants totaling $3,500 were made at the recommendation of two donor fund advisors, also from the Maine Community Foundation. In total, $5,000 was awarded for Native Voices, the first phase of the Wabanaki Voices: Connecting Past, Present, Future exhibit which opens next June. This exhibit will feature the construction of a 10’ wigwam – showcasing the talent and skills of traditional Wabanaki builders. Local high school students will be invited to help with its construction. The wigwam will be used for presentations, related activities during the 2020-21 History House seasons. We invite you to join us in June ’20 to celebrate the opening of Native Voices. Our goal for this exhibit is to bring understanding and appreciation for Skowhegan’s earliest residents.

For more information on our new exhibit, click on “About Us” at skowheganhistoryhouse.org
Membership Benefits…

✓ Recognition as an interested supporter of the preservation and promotion of our heritage
✓ Summer and Winter Newsletters
✓ Access to historical research
✓ Opportunity to submit articles for publication in the Society Newsletter
✓ Consultation with the Curator and Master Gardener
✓ Notification of events and activities

Giving Opportunities…

The History House Association, Inc. welcomes financial support to further its goals, mission, programming, and general operations. History House is a 501(c) (3) non-profit charitable organization and donations are tax deductible within the limits of the IRS Code.

For more information, please contact History House at: P.O. Box 832, Skowhegan, ME 04976 or via email at patriciahorine@skowheganhistoryhouse.org

Society Membership Members represent patrons, families, and friends of the History House who wish to support financially the mission of preserving Skowhegan’s legacy and promoting its heritage.

Student Intern Supporter Contributions go towards supporting a ten week internship for a local high school or college student. The Student Intern assists with special projects, conducts tours, and performs other duties related to operating a museum and research center. This program offers students an opportunity to gain direct work experience, as well as develop communication, and team skills in a professional setting.

In Memoriam Families, family members, or friends may make memorial donations in honor of their loved one. Donations may also be arranged through the deceased’s obituary notice as a remembrance.

Annual Appeal supports goals and general operations.

Bequests and Trusts Charitable donations in the form of a bequest in a will, the establishment of a trust, or other financial arrangements to support our mission are welcome.

Historic Items Donations that have relevance to the historic period of the museum and existing collections are appreciated.

2018 Society Membership Form

Please renew your History House Membership or join today!

Membership dues are the History House’s major source of operating support. Consider what a strong History House means for our community and choose the level of support that’s right for you.

[ ] $24 [ ] $36 [ ] $60 [ ] $120
[ ] $180 [ ] Other Amount $_______

Name ________________________________

Mailing Address
________________________________________________
City/ Town ____________________________
State _______________________ Zip ______________

Email __________________________________________

Method of payment:
[ ] Check, payable to Skowhegan History House
[ ] VISA [ ] American Express
[ ] MasterCard [ ] Other

Card # _____________________________ CVV#___________
Exp. Date ____________________________

Signature ____________________________

For Gift Membership: Please print:

Name ________________________________

Mailing Address
________________________________________________
City/Town ________________________________
State _______________________ Zip ______________

Email __________________________________________

Complete and Return to:
History House Association, Inc.,
PO Box 832, Skowhegan ME 04976

Your membership is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.
From the Archives

Walking Across the Kennebec c. 1910