



The River's Edge

Skowhegan History House Society Newsletter

Summer 2019 Edition

skowheganhistoryhouse.org • (207) 474-6632

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Thank You, Jim Hastings

by Patricia Horine

Throughout his 52 year involvement, Jim worked with Board members and staff to address and support the professional growth and development of History House and

Museum. He served as Board President and Treasurer – and could always be counted on to pitch in whenever a need arose.

We view Jim as the History House historian and thank him for the significant difference he has made toward our growth and development over his time on the Board.

Jim was invited to join the Board by fellow history lover, Doan Eaton in 1967. Back then the Board met once a year. There were no cataloging systems for collections, records of donations, policies for managing the collections, no system for collection

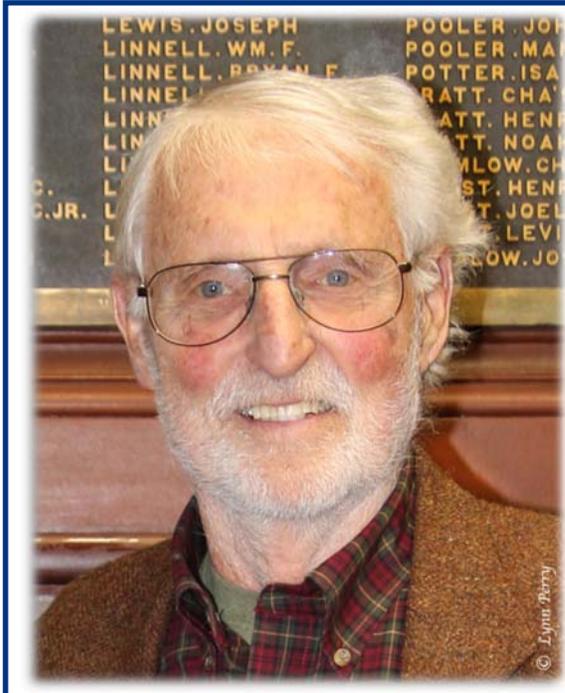
protection measures, limited summer open hours, and limited financial resources to support History House.

The building needed significant

improvements – shoring up the kitchen floor, plugging leaks in the roof and chimney, addressing a wet basement to name a few. Jim was instrumental in recruiting Board members like Val Dionne and others who were able to make major improvements to the building (especially after the 1987 flood).

The History House Board and staff whole heartedly thank Jim for all of the time, support, and energy he has so generously given to History House during

his Board tenure. We wish him the very best as he goes forward into his retirement.



Jim Hastings

The History House Board thanks the following donors for their generous support of its Student Intern Program:

Norm and Patricia Dickey
Franklin Savings Bank
Walter Hight
Allison Palmer

Wentworth Partners & Associates
Bangor Savings Bank
Anonymous Business

Volunteer with Us at History House

Skowhegan History House Museum and Research Center depends upon dedicated volunteers to help us fulfill our mission—which is to protect, preserve, and promote our collections. Volunteers donate thousands of hours each year in service to the Museum, Research Center and the Heirloom Gardens & lawns. Thank you volunteers, we appreciate your dedicated and consistent giving of time, energy, and effort.

Our volunteers help in the following ways:

Assist visitors at both the History House and at events, design and create displays, catalog artifacts, write articles, assist patrons with research, help the Board of Trustees with preparing materials for distribution and mailings, and work in the Heirloom Gardens

If you have time and interest, we invite you to join our team. We always look forward to working with new volunteers.

*You may contact Kay Marsh, our Volunteer Coordinator, at 474-6632
or reach her through an email: volunteercoordinator@skowheganhistoryhouse.org*

The discovery of a trove of old Skowhegan newspapers in a building in Norway last summer sparked a long-term preservation and digitization project that is helping make local history more accessible to people interested in Skowhegan.

Through a partnership with the Maine State Library, the papers were transferred to Augusta last fall where I've had the fortunate opportunity to lead a project to inventory, preserve, and eventually digitize the collection.

The collection represents a fairly comprehensive range of newspapers spanning from 1872 to 1965. Most of the early papers are bound in book form, while later issues were held together in bundles with twine.

Over the winter, I sorted the entire collection and shifted all the loose papers into labeled archival boxes to protect the paper from exposure to elements.



The inventory I created during the process helped identify duplicate issues of the paper that the History House is now donating to the University of Maine and the Maine State Library.

This will ensure backup copies are available in the event anything ever happened to the copies held at the History House. Over the next year, I'll be working with specialized book scanning equipment and word recognition software at the Maine State Library to digitize the collection and make the papers searchable online through the Digital Maine Repository and linked through the History House website.

There's a lot of work ahead and we are always interested in

getting help from volunteers. For more information, feel free to contact me at gretchen.l.clark@maine.gov.

(Photo of Gretchen Clark by Adam Fisher.)

Digitizing History *by Gretchen Clark*

Skowhegan History House Museum & Research Center

Our Mission

Preserving an increasingly valuable historic collection representing Skowhegan's legacy and promoting Skowhegan's cultural heritage

The River's Edge, Skowhegan History House Newsletter, published biannually
Editors: Patricia Horine and Kim Wilson

(All images from SHHMRC permanent collection unless otherwise noted)

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‘Oral Histories’ Program

Continuing this season is our Oral Histories program; Trustee Kay Marsh is available to interview Skowhegan area senior citizens on Mondays at History House to compile an oral history of our region. This has already proven to be an invaluable legacy. Come participate! Call 474-6632 or email Kay at grammy.kay.cee@gmail.com for more details or appointments.

The Amazing Bumblebee *by Patricia Horine*

It seemed to take forever for the warm and dry weather to actually show up this spring. But, as generally unpleasant as the spring weather was, it did provide for a prolonged verdant period of bloom time for spring flowers such as tulips, daffodils, bloodroot, scilla, crocus, forget-me-nots, pulmonaria (to name just a few).

We enjoyed watching various pollinators visit the early plant materials once we finally got into the gardens to work. What especially caught our attention were the large-sized, slow moving bumblebees who methodically flew several inches - back and forth - over the History House lawns and gardens. We wondered what they were doing - and got the answer from Herb Wilson, (*FOR THE BIRDS* columnist for the Sunday edition of the Morning Sentinel). He offered a fascinating account of the bumblebee’s life cycle in an early June column.

Bumblebees who are in the Order Hymenoptera (along with bees, wasps, ants) are social insects. They live and work together to maintain their colony. The queen, the only member of a bumblebee colony to survive the winter, will have mated the previous fall, then hibernated usually in the



soil. She emerges in spring very hungry since she hasn't eaten since the previous summer. This is why she must find early flowers to eat both nectar and pollen. The nectar gives her energy while the pollen helps her replace vital body fats. It also provides protein to help her ovaries mature, and later, to feed her brood.

Instead of digging her own nest cavity, she searches (by smell) for a deserted small rodent nest. She may also look into an opening at the base of a tussock of grass, or even a man-made cavity.

Once the nest site has been located, the queen lays fertile eggs in batches of 4-16 on a ball of pollen and then covers it with wax. She incubates the eggs by lying on them and vibrating her flight muscles to generate heat up to 86 degrees Fahrenheit! The eggs hatch in about 4 days, after which she goes out to feed herself and collect nectar and pollen to feed the larvae. The larvae grow to pupate and then emerge as medium sized, non-

reproductive female workers. They gobble up the pollen and within a day or two, set about helping the queen with nest duties. Some will then go out to forage for pollen and nectar for rearing the next brood (more workers).

In the late summer, the queen lays *continued on page 6...*

Celebrating Architectural Heritage - Historic Home Registry Program



Skowhegan has numerous old homes dating well before 1900 that have interesting histories and are of importance and significance to our community’s history. Skowhegan History House Museum & Research Center offers an opportunity for residents of Skowhegan with homes at least 100 years old to participate in its Historic Home Registry Program.

The program provides an opportunity for the owner to document the home’s age, register it in the Historic Home Registry, and to display an approved house marker indicating the original homesteader, the year of construction, and the owner’s affiliation with the Skowhegan History House Historic Home Registry Program.

Further information can be found under “Programs” at:

skowheganhistoryhouse.org.

The Skowhegan History House recently received a wonderful donation from life-long Skowhegan resident Betsy Chase Hall: a 20 page letter written by World War I soldier Errol Chase to his family back in Skowhegan. This letter, commenced on November 11, 1918, tells of the horrible conditions Errol and his colleagues endured and how, until the armistice, “(war) seemed more like something which would go on and on of itself.” We are so grateful to Betsy and her family for thinking of the History House and wanting Errol’s letter to be available for the public to see and read. Below is an excerpt from this very special letter home, describing that final day of World War I.



L to R, Betsy Hall, Patricia Horine, and Kim Wilson

Armistice Day *by Errol Chase*

“Dear Folks,

This is a day to be long remembered and many a prayer of Thanksgiving has been said by those who have been so fortunate as to come through the war, alive and unmaimed. And I am one of these. Many times it has seemed as if I might not get through, but through I have come with the best souvenir of the war that a man can have, a whole skin.

These last few weeks though have been terrible ones for this division - the best division that has come over – the worst it has ever known, and peace or rather cessation of hostilities has intervened to save the last remnant of what was once a glorious out-fit. For there are very, very few left and it brings tears to our eyes to see any of



War Recruitment Effort, Dodge Block, Skowhegan c. 1916



WWI Display at Fogg’s Drug Store (now M Thai) on Water Street c. 1917

those few, they have suffered so and are so near complete exhaustion, most of whom should have been in hospitals long before this. Sickness has taken a heavier toll than casualties although God knows there have been enough of those.

This division, the second American division to go into the trenches has been in at the finish and has been fighting all of the time with the exception of two weeks rest or else under conditions as bad as fighting. It has been in every scrap of any importance and started that first American offensive on July 18 which has been the turning point of the war. But for all this it has paid dearly as very few men remain who started out with us

on the fifth day of February and fewer officers. The men though, who in this war deserve the credit are the infantry soldier and his immediate commanders – the men who are called, the “Dough Boys”.

Imagine men living in a place, as wet as our lower garden in the spring, incessantly under shell-fire and both direct and indirect machine gun fire, getting perhaps one meal a day, having nothing dry to put on, not being able to light a light or to raise their heads over the edge of the hole they have dug for themselves – a hole about like a grave, and a yard or so from the next man. Rain practically every day and night. Then when they started over the top after weary weeks of that, to lay in the dark for the morning to come to recommence the advance without even a single blanket or overcoat to keep warm when ice skinned over on water left in a pail.

All honor to those boys.

I will tell you about my impression of the last day of the war and I have several scenes impressed on my mind forever. I got up shortly after 7:30 for I was up nearly all night before. Ate breakfast and started out in the Ford truck, to see about moving up the kitchens as we had been on the advance the past few days and it was again necessary to move the kitchens up nearer the men. I went up to where the kitchens had moved to the previous day to see the men in charge of each Battalion group and show them where to go and see what they advised. It was a terribly cold damp day with an exceptionally heavy



Lt. Errol Chase, 1918

fog which hung very thick in the valley up which we went. We were of course way up ahead of the artillery and the shells going over our heads made the weirdest sounds I have ever heard them make, accentuated by the heaviness of the air. We were putting over a heavy fire and the Boche were plugging our back areas in an endeavor to prevent our bringing up reserved food and material. We had heard and knew that the armistice had to be agreed before 11 o'clock but hardly believed even if it would be signed that hostilities would cease for several days, and it certainly seemed very far from the end of the war by the noise and appearances.

But when 11 o'clock came all the noise immediately stopped and everything seemed as calm and peaceable as if there was no war. Even then it still seemed unbelievable but as nothing started again, we felt certain of it. It was a wonderful changing of everything. No more moving in the dark, no more trying hardships, no more bullets singing by or big shells landing too close for comfort, no more laying out in the mud in shell holes with hardly anything to eat. Such was the last day of war for me.

*Errol C. Chase
1st Lieutenant 128th Artillery*



Armistice celebration, Water Street, Skowhegan. 11/11/1918

The 21st Century Workforce Initiative

by Jeremy Lehan, Director RSU 54/ MSAD 54 Adult & Community Education

“**The 21st Century Workforce Initiative** is a 10-week, paid work experience program being offered through the Department of Health and Human Services in partnership with Lawrence and Skowhegan Adult Education Programs and the Skowhegan Career Center.

Our goal is to assist youth, aged 16-24, in developing and refining the skills and work habits necessary for successful entry into the local workforce. Participants will participate in a three-week course to obtain work ready skills and to improve academic competencies essential for success in the workplace.

In addition, participants will complete an inventory of career interests and aptitudes, explore a variety of available and realistic career options, and design a clear and time sensitive career pathway to guide entry into the workforce.”

This summer, History House welcomes Amy Wiggins, our first intern via The 21st Century Workforce Initiative. She is a 2018 graduate of Skowhegan High School and will enter her sophomore year at UMF in the fall. Amy has a keen interest in history and an eye for detail. We expect she will be a wonderful addition to our team.



.. *The Amazing Bumblebee, cont. from pg . 3*

more fertilized eggs that give rise to new queens. Some of her eggs aren't fertilized and they develop into males who are usually smaller than the female workers. They live outside of the nest. It's their job to fertilize the newly born queens as they emerge from the nest – ensuring that their life cycle continues... the queens hibernate overwinter and are ready to start new colonies in the spring. The old queen, the female workers, and the males do not survive the winter.

There are more than 270 species of native bees in Maine. Just like bumblebees, all are essential pollinators. If we all took a few simple steps to increase food and habitat for pollinators, then collectively we would make an appreciable difference – in the form of a good deal more territory for pollinators to call home. **At History House** we work toward making our gardens and surrounding landscape a pollinator haven with diverse

plantings. Many pollinators are active at different times of year, so we include a variety of plants that bloom from early spring through late fall. To attract a full spectrum of pollinators, we choose plant materials of various heights, including flowering trees and shrubs, and those with a range of flower shapes and sizes. We avoid using pesticides.

Thank you to our garden volunteers: Chris and Bill Plant, Marty Kitchen, Marilyn Renfrew, and Pat Burdick who work diligently throughout the garden season to maintain the History House gardens and lawn.



A pollinator visits the History House

From a Volunteer by Diane Crowley



I am a creature of habit. I guess most of us are, to some extent. I like to read the morning paper; the day is incomplete without it. Let's see the headline today. "Jealous-crazed former suitor shoots woman and man at Skowhegan." Oh my goodness, what is this world coming to? Grandma would be surprised and horrified because she never had to pick up the paper to a headline like this! Or did she? The date on this newspaper is April 30, 1930.

As a volunteer at the History House, I have been indexing a scrapbook of newspaper articles kept by a local school teacher. Interspersed with school, church, and social events are a few clippings with headlines similar to the above quoted. Skowhegan has been an interesting town, and still is. Come join us as a volunteer at the History House to learn more. We have lots of interesting jobs just waiting for you.

Membership Benefits...

- ✓ Recognition as an interested supporter of the preservation and promotion of our heritage
- ✓ Summer & 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 and mission, programming, general operations, and endowment activities. *History House is a 501(c) (3) non-profit charitable organization and donations are tax deductible within the limits of the IRS Code.*

For information on any of the following giving opportunities, please write to us at the Skowhegan History House Museum & Research Center, P.O. Box 832, Skowhegan, Maine 04976, call 207-474-6632, or email president@skowheganhistoryhouse.org

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

Major Partner This level of support allows the Association to fast track projects that dramatically affect programming that preserves, protects, and promotes our heritage.

In Memoriam Families, family members, or friends may make memorial donations in honor of their loved one.

Remembrance Donations may be arranged through the deceased's obituary notice as a remembrance.

Annual Appeal Contributions to the Annual Appeal advance the goals and mission, programming, and general operations.

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

Skowhegan History House Museum and Research Center 2019 Society Membership Form

You may 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: Please make your check payable to Skowhegan History House

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.

Skowhegan History House Museum & Research Center
P. O. Box 832
Skowhegan, Maine 04976
(207) 474-6632



From the Archives: *Grandstand at the Skowhegan Fairgrounds c. 1940*