



Artifacts and Anchors

A quarterly newsletter for Members, Volunteers, and Friends of the Kittery Historical & Naval Society



Pepperrell Cove Water Ski Club

A new exhibit at the Museum celebrates the history of the water ski club with photos and period objects, including an original pair of waterskis!

Thanks to the generous donation by Sherri Frisbee Marr of skis and memorabilia, the Museum is pleased to present a new exhibit for the 2021 season about the remarkable and successful Pepperrell Cove Water Ski Club. The “ski club” competed all over New England and the Mid-Atlantic, won many awards, and provided a healthy and disciplined summertime activity for the young people of Kittery. We hope you will all come to visit the Museum, now that we are able to welcome you again, to view this delightful exhibit.



Frank Frisbee and Jean Smith performing a difficult routine, circa 1958.



Team members perform a no-hands balletic move on one ski.

If you look out over Pepperrell Cove in mid-summer today, it is hard to imagine tow boats with multiple skiers performing complicated and daring feats, even over a ski jump, in the crowded waters of the cove just in front of Frisbee’s Wharf. But for 20 years the club gave demonstrations, hosted competitions with other ski clubs, and practiced on summer evenings in the cove.

To learn more about the club and how it felt to participate, we interviewed two former members, Bonnie Pierce (née Grace) and Linda Walton (née Smith). Bonnie was also able to collect memories of the ski club from other former members who are still local.

Summer 2021

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A group of friends who skied for enjoyment in Pepperrell Cove in the 1950s became a formal club when they hosted an initial meeting of interested skiers at the Lewis Square fire station in 1955 and determined that there was enough interest to become a club.

Early members included Frank Frisbee and his wife Evelyn, David Frisbee, Murray Hoyt, Brenda Frisbee, Roy Armsden, Barbara Carlson, Alice Emery, Fred Perry, and Frank Estes. About 20 people attended the first meeting, a film on water skiing was shown, and Frank Frisbee was elected president.

Bonnie Pierce grew up in Kittery Point and remembers as a girl stopping on Pepperrell Road in the evening (along with many fellow Kittery citizens) to watch the ski club practice.



See SKI CLUB page 4



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From the PRESIDENT

What a difference a year makes! In May of 2020 as COVID-19 cases were increasing, the opening of the Museum was delayed for what we thought would be a short time. We thought we might be able to open later in the year, but eventually, the board of trustees had to make the necessary and difficult decision to not open the Museum in 2020. With the loss of income from admissions to the Museum, we were anticipating a terrible year financially.

But you, our members, really stepped up to the challenge. During our annual membership month in June of 2020, we had several new members join the Society. Members both new and present also contributed generously in addition to the normal membership dues. For all of that we are very grateful.

Now, as we look to our 2021 season things are looking much brighter than they did a year ago. COVID-19 restrictions are being relaxed and the Museum opened to the public on May 26. We're very excited to be able to welcome visitors again to our Museum. Unfortunately, we have had to open with reduced hours from 2019 due to a lack of volunteers to welcome our visitors. If you or someone you know can volunteer for a two-hour shift at the Museum, please call 207-439-3080 or email kitterymuseum@netzero.net. Training will be provided, and each volunteer is accompanied by a trustee.

June being membership month, it's time to renew our memberships. You will be receiving a letter with a membership envelope soon. This year, you may also renew your membership, or join the Society if you are not already a member, online at the Museum's website. Just go to kitterymuseum.org and click on "Participate" in the top menu.

Finally, please take some time this summer and drop in and see what's new at the Museum. Wishing you a happy and healthy summer,

Bob

Bob Gray

From our library:

MANNERS

Culture and Dress

IN THE

Best American Society

by Richard A. Wells, A.M.,
King, Richardson & Co., Publishers,
1890

VISITS AND VISITING

CALLING AT AN INCONVENIENT HOUR.

Should you call by chance at an inconvenient hour, when perhaps the lady is going out, or sitting down to luncheon, retire as soon as possible, even if politely asked to remain. You need not let it appear that you feel yourself an intruder; every well-bred or even good-tempered person knows what to say on such an occasion; but politely withdraw with a promise to call again, if the lady seems to be really disappointed.

Artifacts and Anchors is published quarterly by the Kittery Historical and Naval Society, P.O. Box 453, Kittery, ME 03904. Edited by: Lauren Gallant, Janice Farmer, and Dean Gallant. Submission of articles by members for possible publication is encouraged. Please contact the newsletter at editor@kitterymuseum.com for details.

Information about The Kittery Historical and Naval Museum may be found on our website: kitterymuseum.org or on [facebook.com/KitteryMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/KitteryMuseum).

From the DIRECTOR

Hello Friends,

We are very excited here at the Museum as we open our doors on May 26th for our 2021 season. We look forward to seeing our volunteers, members and visitors again.

Last year was one that will go down in the history books. This year we are happy to be able to share our history again. Some of our new displays include the working waterfront with a lobster exhibit, and Pepperrell Cove and Kittery Point through the centuries. We have changed our timeline room to an art gallery full of local artists as well as art work featuring Kittery scenes. We are also very lucky to be able to display the Sarah Mildred Long Traveling Exhibit from the Maine DOT. It will be in the Museum for our 2021 season. Make sure you stop in to view these panels highlighting the “Middle Bridge.”

As always, we are looking for volunteers who will help us to promote and share Kittery’s history with the community. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved both inside and outside the Museum. We offer on-the-job training and as a bonus you will receive free local history classes.

The Annual Independence Day Celebration is expected to take place in person again on June 26th this year with William Whipple leading the charge by reading the Declaration of Independence at the Town Hall. We are also gearing up for Kittery’s 375th. Celebrations and history abound as we draw closer to our Anniversary of Incorporation.

Thank you for your amazing support! We couldn’t have made it through 2020 without members like you!

Come in for a visit — we hope to see you soon,

Kim

Kim Sanborn, Director



Boston Post Cane

Kittery Resident Malcolm Foss, age 103, was presented the Boston Post Cane at a ceremony held at the Museum on May 5. Mr. Foss is a long-time Kittery resident, WWII veteran, and Shipyard retiree. He is the town’s 23rd recipient of the prestigious Boston Post Cane honor. Society president, Bob Gray, also gave Foss a hat and coin, both of which commemorated Maine’s bicentennial last year.

News

Donation from Fabulous Find

In May, the Society and its Museum received a generous donation of more than \$6,100 from Fabulous Find of Kittery. “This is an incredible grant,” says Ken Schoman, treasurer of the Society. “It will see us through the process of re-opening, after being closed all last year due to the pandemic.”

Trim work completed

Repairs to the outside trim on the Museum building are complete. PVC was used for the majority of trim to reduce maintenance costs in the future.

More Sprucing up

Special thanks to Tina Orfe for her work painting the exterior Garrison doors, window boxes, and stairs at the Museum. Her volunteer efforts are very much appreciated.

Elections held at March members’ meeting

Two new trustees were elected to the board at the March 23 members’ meeting. We welcome trustees Jerry Robock and Shealagh Gray, and associate trustee Doug Cole. With the exception of secretary, all officers were re-elected. Many thanks to our long-serving secretary, Karen Longcrier, who did not seek re-election. Jeannie Voorhees was elected as secretary.

Members’ Meeting June 26

The next quarterly members’ meeting will be held in person at the Museum on June 26. All members are invited to attend.

New Hours for Museum

The Museum opened this year with somewhat reduced hours (Wed.-Sat. 10-2, Sun. 1-4). We hope that more members will volunteer for a couple hours a week to allow us to achieve our regular Summer schedule.



Members of the Pepperrell Cove Water Ski Club around 1958: Front row, from left: Dot Horton, Fran Sullivan, Louise Anderson, Barbara Carlson, Evelyn Frisbee, Linda Smith, Beverly Landers, Diane Sterling, Gail Ferguson, Brenda Frisbee. Back row: Harry Bullard, Frank Frisbee, Dick Merrill, Dick Emery, Nelson Paine, Lawrence Tobey, Fred Perry, Frank Estes, Roy Armsden, Dove Frisbee, Edward Powell, Murray Hoyt.

SKI CLUB from page 1

Bonnie was entranced with the feats of the skiers and when she and her friend Linda Smith were old enough, they joined the club. In order to join, they had to prove that they were adequate swimmers, but ski experience was not required and the adult members of the club were willing to teach young enthusiasts the basics. Anyone who already knew how to ski would be asked to show “what they could do,” but all were welcome.

The Club met in the space where you can now find ‘Provisions’ of the Pepperrell Cove group. The ‘season’ began before school got out in June, and ended on the Labor Day weekend. The members were a mixed group of young adults — people with jobs, spouses, and children — and Traip students who loved the water and enjoyed the sport. The members paid dues, and local organizations (the Lions Club primarily) and local businesses supported club activities. Members sold refreshments and souvenirs at club events.

By 1958, the club was so well organized that it hosted the State of Maine tournament, competing with clubs from Rangeley, Wilton, Belgrade, Augusta,

Sebago, and others. From the *Portsmouth Herald*, Aug. 6, 1958: “Events will include jumping and slalom racings for girls, boys, and men, and a mixed doubles class. Trophies are being put up by the local club and will be awarded the first three winners in each event.”

The club’s events would typically include an opening act of costumed young women skiing abreast, carrying colorful banners and performing a water ballet. Bonnie and her friends remember that various skiers had specialty acts, including “The Disc” performed by Murray Hoyt; trick skiing (ski has no runners) by Harry Bullard; barefoot skiing by John Ferguson (who won the state record for the longest barefoot ski, and who spent a week in the hospital after for his feet to heal); a clown act (often “how not to ski”) by Gardner and Lawrence Tobey; trick jumping by Roy Armsden, Dave Frisbee, and Dick Merrill. Frank Frisbee and his partners (his wife Evelyn, and later Gail Ferguson, Marcelene Wheeler, Linda Smith, and Linda Norwell) had by 1964 won the state championship for Mixed Doubles six years out of seven.

The local newspaper promised that the

following day’s Fourth of July ski show in Pepperrell Cove would entertain the town with “The flying saucer — a comparatively small round disc — now also challenges the veteran skier, so David Emery will take a chair along on his rounds and do his turns and stands on it. Triple turns on the trick skis will be performed simultaneously by Murray Hoyt and Bruce Piche; they will be joined by Tim Pucko and Elroy Moulton in several new jumping acts. Gail Ferguson and Marceline Wheeling will climb the shoulders of Charlie Rankin, Elroy Moulton and Roy Armsden for a five man pyramid; a pair of championship mixed doubles performers will demonstrate their skill; and a couple of clown acts will provide comic relief. A new Hawaiian hula, flag bearers and ballet dancers will also, among many others, perform.” (*Portsmouth Herald*, 3 July 1961)

The *Portsmouth Herald* reported on events held in Pepperrell Cove by the Ski Club from 1957 through 1973. Young people joined and skied; those who had to leave the club to pursue college studies and employment were replaced with others from the town. The Frisbee family produced many performers over the years, and Frank Frisbee continued to be the organizer and producer of the events.

Linda Walton remembers that several years ago Bonnie Frisbee helped to organize a gathering of many former ski club members, as a tribute to Frank Frisbee. The guest of honor loved every minute of the event, and memories, memorabilia, and merriment were shared by all!

Bonnie Pierce says that she regrets that the young people of Kittery do not now have a summer activity so absorbing and rewarding as the ski club. But for 20 years Kittery was privileged to have this remarkable club that entertained the town and visitors, providing both adults and young people an opportunity to excel and have fun, and showcased water athletic prowess by winning competitions year after year.

We hope you will come down to the Museum to see some of the equipment, photos (by Douglas Armsden, brother of skier Roy Armsden), and memorabilia from the shows. Also on display are artifacts and memorabilia from the Frisbee family store — the oldest family run store in the United States, founded in 1828.

—Lauren Gallant

OLD TOLLHOUSE TORN DOWN.

HISTORY OF QUAIN STRUCTURE AT EASTERLY END OF KITTERY POINT BRIDGE.

By I.P. MILLER, BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE.

REPRINTED IN *THE PORTSMOUTH HERALD*, OCT. 28, 1902 —

The old tollhouse at the easterly end of the Kittery Point bridge was torn down last week and the materials hauled away somewhere out of sight. It was not a difficult job to tear it to pieces as it was a small affair, only one story high and covering but a small extent of ground, and was much decayed. There was about as much cellar to it as there was house.

It was built in 1839, the year the bridge across Spruce creek was opened to travel, superseding the ferry from the end of what is now called Old Ferry Lane to the landing near the ancient Gerrish house, which previously had been the only means of transportation across the creek at that point.

It stood on piles on the northerly side of the bridge, near its westerly end, for several years, but the high and steep hill which comes down close to that end of the bridge made the location a bad one for a tollhouse, as teams bound across the bridge from that end found it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to stop at the tollhouse when the roads were slippery in winter. So it was moved to the other end of the bridge, to a piece of ground but little larger than enough for it to stand on, and which was sold to the town with the proviso that if it ever ceased to be used by the town it should revert to the seller or his estate.

The bridge was made a free one by act of the Maine legislature in 1895, and the taking of the toll ceased on

Saturday, July 6, of that year, on which day the people of Kittery had quite a celebration in Gerish's grove, where a band, the speakers and prominent citizens occupied a platform decorated with flags, bunting and flowers, and a large crowd assembled.

Horace Mitchell, who, as state senator had engineered through the bill to free the bridge, presided; Hon. Moses H. Safford, for the bridge corporation, formally turned the bridge over to Edward F. Safford, chairman of the board of selectmen, representing the town; and Hon. Llewellyn Powers of Houlton gave an address, which was followed by remarks from others. In the evening there was a band concert, and a fine display of fireworks from the bridge. About everybody in the town who owned a team drove there during the day, for the express purpose of crossing the bridge without paying a toll.

The freeing of the bridge of course put the toll house out of commission, but the last toll taker, Mrs. Joanna Brooks, continued to live in it. At the Kittery town meeting in March of last year an order was passed directing the selectmen to remove the building within sixty days. The selectmen were willing to obey the order, but found themselves unable to do so.



The bridge across Spruce Creek, circa 1880s. The toll house is at the end of the bridge on the left; the Lady Pepperrell House is visible on the far right.

The heirs of the Duncan estate, to which the site of the tollhouse had reverted, in accordance with the terms of transfer to the town, denied the right of the town to interfere with the building, claiming that ownership of the same went with the land. Anyway, they did not remove it, and Mrs. Brooks continued to live there.

Recently the Duncan estate was bought by James Walker, who notified the selectmen that if the town wanted the building the town could have it, only take it off his land; he didn't want it there—he didn't want it anyway. The selectmen offered to give it to Mrs. Brooks on condition that she would have it moved to some other site forthwith, but she had not place to which to remove it, so the only alternative was to tear it down, and this has been done.

Diminutive and low as the building was and situated at the foot of a hill, its removal has made a noticeable change in the landscape, and afforded a much finer view of the river when approaching it from the Kittery Point side. ■

VOLUNTEER Spotlight

Tom Prince is a true lover of local history and he comes by it naturally. His family roots in Kittery go back five generations (and, in Maine, five generations before that). His great great grandfather moved to Kittery after the Civil War and worked at the Navy Yard as a sailmaker. His great grandfather owned a grocery and provision store in the Foreside until the early 1920s and served as Kittery Town Clerk for many years; Prince Avenue, where he built the first house on the street, is named after him.

Tom grew up in Kittery and went to Wentworth Dennett and Frisbee schools, then Traip Academy. After he graduated from Traip his family moved to York Beach where they began a seasonal rental and motel business on Nubble Point. His deep roots in Kittery and York led to an enduring interest in the history of the Prince family and he became the de facto family archivist, collecting hundreds of photos, letters, manuscripts, and memorabilia. This in turn led to an interest in the history of Kittery. His two great grandfathers, Clarence Prince and Henry Bicknell, were instrumental in forming and operating the Portsmouth, Kittery, and York Street Railway (the “PK&Y”—affectionately known as the “Push, Kick, and Yank”) that serviced Kittery and

York hotels, guest houses, and local citizens around the turn of the last century.

Even during his “day job”—he worked in banking technology and operations for over forty years—he found time to pursue his interest in history and wrote histories of the First National Bank of Portsmouth and of TD Bank. After retiring from TD Bank in 2014 he focused his attention on the Prince family history, which led to two books and several research papers. Around 2015 he shared some of the photos and papers dealing with Kittery history with Kim Sanborn at the Museum. Not surprisingly, this led to a deeper interest in the Museum’s collections and displays.

One paper Tom shared dealt with the Pocahontas Hotel on Gerrish Island and its owner, Samuel Ellery Jennison. Readers of *Artifacts and Anchors* may recall reference to that hotel in our Spring 2021 issue—thanks to Tom’s research.

He appreciates the challenge of tracking down facts, people, and tales hidden in the mists of time or in dusty archives, and is not afraid to tackle projects that some might find daunting. So earlier this year when Kim asked him if he could research and write an update about the



Volunteer Tom Prince

Kittery homes and structures mentioned in John Eldridge Frost’s 1947 *Colonial Village*, which the Museum plans to republish for Kittery’s 375th anniversary, he promptly agreed. For him, the best parts were the opportunity to learn about many of the old homes in our town, to connect (or reconnect, even as far back as his school days) with local residents, to explore archival and online resources, and to preserve in print what he had learned so that future readers could connect the buildings they see every day with the people and stories that lived within their walls.

We eagerly look forward to the publication of the updated *Colonial Village* and are grateful for Tom’s enthusiasm and dedication to make it happen. —Dean Gallant



Spotlight on Collections

Who, What, Where

Men and animals haying in Kittery Point in 1890. Do you know who the workers were and where the field was?

Answers on page 8.

From the Archives



Kittery Electric Light Co. parade float

Standing in front of the Kittery Electric Light Co. float for the 1947 Kittery 300th Birthday parade are, *left to right*: Ervin Mitchell, Fred Page, Stanley Wood, Bill Perkins, Charlie Woodsum, Beryl Page, and Hepsie Adams.



View from Frisbee's Wharf looking toward Pepperrell Road

A photo from the Armsden collection, taken before the Pepperrell Cove Water Ski Club started meeting in the space behind the door marked "ICE." In the 1960s, this space was converted into a club house by the Pepperrell Cove Boat Club.



June is Membership Month!

Don't forget to renew your annual membership — or if you are not yet a member, why not BECOME ONE!

Go to our website or click on this link to [Participate](#)



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Answer to Who, What, Where (p. 6): Written on the back of the picture, “The tennis court field in 1890. Hired man on load, John Thaxter on horse rake, Jake Drew with oxen (Gee & Haw).” John Thaxter was the son of writer Celia Thaxter and the father of Rosamond Thaxter, who lived all her life in Kittery Point at Champernowne Farm on Cutts Island. The field being hayed later became the site of a tennis court built for the neighborhood by Rosamond. (From the Rosamond Thaxter Collection)