



Artifacts and Anchors

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



PHOTO: DOUGLAS ARMSDEN (COURTESY OF THOMAS PRINCE)

This 1951 photo shows the Fix It Ladies hard at work. It was taken in the living room of Mrs. Edna Prince's home, 15 Prince Avenue, Kittery, where the meetings took place. Mrs. Prince, the record keeper for the group, is on the left recording a tally of completed work.

Kittery's "Fix It Group"

From the 1930s to the 1960s, a group of Kittery women volunteered countless hours to a mission of clothing and caring.

A Narrative by Thomas Prince

A headline in the *Portsmouth Herald* newspaper of January 12, 1951 reads, "Kittery Church Women Ship Clothing Overseas." The article states, "The Fix It Group of the Kittery Second Methodist Church's Ladies Aid Society is one of the most active church organizations in the Portsmouth area."

Following is an overview of the history of the Fix It Group and the women in its membership, most of whom were associated with the Ladies Aid Society of Kittery's Second Methodist Church, today's St. Mark's United Methodist Church, located on Government Street in Kittery Foreside.

A Bit of History

Church Ladies Aid Societies were first formed across our country during the American Civil War and dedicated

to sending garments, bandages, blankets, etc. to soldiers fighting in war. Forwarding ahead seventy years to the 1930s, the Second Methodist Church continued to have a very active Ladies Aid Society. The president of this group was Mrs. Hattie Webber who held the position over 30 years. The group was an active organization of women supporting the work of the church through fund-raising by arranging activities including church suppers, lawn parties, concerts, white elephant tables at craft fairs, and representing the church in local activities supporting the needy.

A Mission of Caring

What set Kittery's Second Methodist Church apart from other churches was a group of home-trained seamstresses who willingly applied their skills to represent the church in its mission of caring for

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those in need. Throughout World War II in the early 1940s these Kittery church ladies assisted the American Red Cross by mending and repairing old clothes. The clothing was then shipped across the country via the Red Cross organization to those in need while the nation was engaged in the world conflict.

After World War II ended in 1945, the requirement to supply the Red Cross with clothing diminished. Over the next few years the church ladies, still wanting to provide assistance, gathered under the urging of Mrs. Harriet Fife, who previously helped with the Red Cross activities. She asked, "Why can't we ladies who like to sew have regular days to meet and make, mend, or fix clothing for others?" Thus the "Fix It Group" formed on January 15, 1948. The group had no organization, no officers, no dues, no cash collections, and no rules. The unofficial spokesperson for the group was Mrs. Hattie Webber, who lived at 23 Stimson Street. As mentioned earlier, she was the president of the Ladies Aid Society of the Second Methodist Church. The record keeper and secretary, as well as hostess for the Fix It Group, was Mrs. Edna Prince.

See FIX IT GROUP, page 6



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From the PRESIDENT

Greetings Members,

Despite the fact that it is still February as I write this, and that we are awaiting a storm that is supposed to dump a foot of snow on us, I know that spring is quickly approaching and with it comes the reopening of our museum after its being closed for the winter. And as in springs past we look forward to welcoming our visitors and showing off Kittery's remarkable history. With Covid now (hopefully) on the wane, we are looking forward to a busy season, and especially so with this being the 375th anniversary of Kittery's incorporation as a town. If you haven't been in the museum during the past couple of years, you'll see a number of changes in our displays when you visit.

The days and hours the museum is open during the season is totally dependent on the number of volunteers we have available. If you are interested in volunteering at the museum, please come by and see us on **Saturday, April 2 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** We'll give you a tour of the museum and we can talk about how you might be able to help us in welcoming our visitors and displaying Kittery's history.

Looking forward to a busy season,

Bob

Bob Gray

President

From our library:

MANNERS

Culture and Dress

IN THE

Best American Society

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

CURE FOR THE CROUP.

A piece of fresh lard as large as a butternut, rubbed up with sugar in the same way that butter and sugar are prepared for the dressing of puddings, divided into three parts and given at intervals of twenty minutes, will relieve any case of croup which has not already progressed to the fatal point.

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,

Welcome to a new year and new season at the Kittery Historical & Naval Museum! This year marks a historical milestone in Kittery. We are celebrating 375 years of incorporation. We have a calendar of great events happening around town throughout the season.

Inside the walls of the Museum new and updated displays are starting to take shape. I encourage anyone who hasn't visited in the last few years to stop by. Explore our amazing history through our exhibits, videos, and digital database. Plan a trip with the kids and grandkids. Our scavenger hunt is just the thing to encourage the young ones to become interested in history by becoming detectives.

Let's not let history become a thing of the past. We are here to promote and encourage the study of local history through research, the collection of documents, artifacts and properties associated with Kittery's history. We strive to share this information with the community through photographs, exhibits and displays.

This is a great time to become part of the Museum. 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. Whether you are tech savvy or old school we have something for everyone!

Become a volunteer, become a member, become involved!

Thank you for your support!

See you soon,

Kim

Kim Sanborn
Director

Not yet a member? We would love for you to join! Go to our website or click on this link:

Participate

News & Events

Free Lecture by John Forti "Four Centuries of New England Garden History"

**April 13, 2022
7 p.m., Star Theater**



In conjunction with the Kittery Historical Society's Garden Tour in July, we are presenting celebrated horticultural historian, lecturer, and author, John Forti. He is the author of *The Heirloom Gardener: Traditional Plants & Skills for the Modern World* and Executive Director of Bedrock Gardens in Lee, NH. He has served as Director of Horticulture at Plimoth Plantation, Curator and Director of Historic Landscapes at Strawberry Banke Museum, and as Director of Horticulture and Education of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Please pre-register at the Kittery Community Center, on the KCC website, or by calling 207-439-3800.

Upcoming Events

March 8 Annual Meeting All members invited. Will be a Zoom meeting. Watch your email for the link.

April 2 Free Day at the Museum A chance to check out the Museum as we prepare for opening day.

April 20 Museum Opens for the Season

April 28 Grand Hotels Kim Sanborn at Kittery Adult Ed. Sign up on the KAE website.

May 4 Postcards From the Past Kim Sanborn at Kittery Adult Ed. Sign up on the KAE website.

May 23 Sinking of the Squalus Bob Gray at Kittery Adult Ed. Sign up on the KAE website.

Volunteers needed for July 9, 2022

Kittery Seaside Gardens Through the Centuries

We are looking for volunteers to help with logistics/parking, to serve as garden docents, to take tickets, to hand out programs, and more. We hope that members of the Kittery Historical and Naval Society will step up to help make this event a successful one to benefit our Museum. Your time commitment will be short, but the benefit to the Society will be considerable. No special history or gardening knowledge is needed. If you would be willing to lend a few hours of your time, please contact Lauren Gallant (gallant@mit.edu), or Kim Sanborn (kitterymuseum@netzero.net), or phone 207-439-3080 and leave a message. *Thank You!*



PHOTO: LAUREN GALLANT

Plans for the tour of historical house gardens in Kittery Point, “Kittery Seaside Gardens Through the Centuries,” are progressing well. Ten sites, including nine from John Frost’s book *Colonial Village*, are now planned for the tour: the Lady Pepperrell Mansion, the Kittery First Congregational Church cemetery, the Follett house, the Hooke house, the historical demonstration gardens at Fort McClary, the Sir William Pepperrell Mansion, the Bray house, the 1798 house, one Moore’s Island garden, and the Kerswell Tavern.

The tour, in celebration of Kittery’s 375th anniversary, will be held on Saturday, July 9, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. Tickets will be sold online and in person at the Museum—more information to come. On the day of the tour, ticket holders will be given a printed brochure that will include a map and information about the sites on the tour.

We have been looking through our library and files for information and anecdotes about some of the houses, and characters associated with them, on the garden tour.

Following is a story about an early owner of the 1798 House, and also an interesting discovery made by the current owners about the date of the house.

THE 1798 HOUSE

The property was purchased in the late 18th century by Pelatiah Fernald, a “joiner” (carpenter).

From a letter of greeting sent by Horace Lunt, an alumnus of the No. 6 & No. 10 schools of Gerrish Island and Brave Boat Harbor, for the schools’ annual reunion. (Reprinted from “Artifacts and Anchors” Vol. 1, Autumn 2003.)

Uncle Pelatiah

“I recall the scene of ‘uncle’ Pelatiah Fernald rowing ‘cross-handed into the creek one evening, and landing his catch of fish on the beach this side of the first brow. It was a good haul, and as the man, who then seemed to be old, but probably was in his prime, threw out his slippery load, he held a plump cod up to me with his weather beaten hand, and said: ‘Here, I’ll give you this,’ and I remember how eagerly I ran home with my specimen and ordered it cooked, as if I had braved the ocean myself, and had caught a good supper for the family.

“There were many men of uncle Pelatiah’s craft in the village, in those days of the [eighteen] forties; and it would

be most interesting reading ... if it were possible to write down the very words that some of those old skippers used while recounting their adventures ‘on the banks.’ On cold, stormy winter days they gathered around the stoves in the grocery stores and spun their yarns. Capt. Charles Mitchell, I remember, was especially gifted in his speech, and seemed to carry the log of his voyage in his memory. When he pulled the visor of his cap down over his eyes, as was frequently his habit, one might expect to hear something very exciting. Some of the phrases from the parlance of those storm worn fisher folks still linger in my memory. Such expressions as ‘we lay by under a three reefed forslé’; ‘A bonnet off her jib’; ‘We seed it looked a little greasy to the norard and eastward’; ‘We come home scuppers under’ &c, were often heard in their stories.”

Such yarns and stories were captured by another occupant of the 1798 House, George Savary Wasson, a talented marine painter, carver, and writer in his books *Cap’n Simeon’s Store*, *The Green Shay*, and *Home From Sea*. The books recorded the dialect of local mariners and were praised by Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and even William James.



USING DENDROCHRONOLOGY TO DATE THE “1798 HOUSE”

This red extended cape sits close to Pepperrell Road in Kittery Point and has a carved plaque on the side with the date 1798. The original of the plaque was carved by George Savary Wasson, the artist and writer who owned the house from 1888 to 1917. The plaque was moved out of the weather several years ago and Dave Kaselauskas carved a perfect copy that can be seen today.

Lauren and Dean Gallant, the current owners, had long wondered if the house was indeed built in 1798. They had heard of the possibility of dating a building using dendrochronology, whereby the growth ring patterns of a structure’s timbers were compared to known patterns of similar species and location. An article in the *New York Times* last year pointed them to a local expert, Bill Flynt, recently retired from Historic Deerfield, Inc., where he had served as architectural conservator for 40 years. Late in the fall he came to Kittery Point and, using a custom coring bit, collected 15 samples from beams throughout the house.

Timbers to be sampled must show a “waney edge,” or traces of bark—so that the outermost ring, the last growth ring, represents the year the tree was felled. New England housebuilding practice was to cut trees in the late fall or winter, after the sap had stopped running and when they would be easier to haul out of the forest.

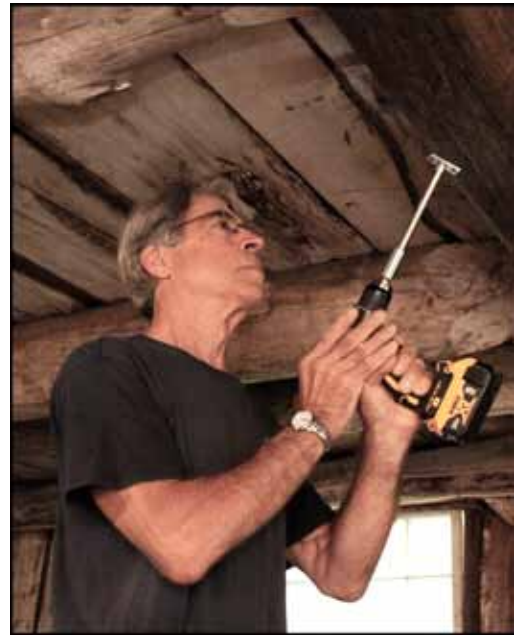


PHOTO: J.L.C. TIM HEALEY

Bill Flynt, using a custom coring bit to collect samples from beams to aid in dating a structure. (*Journal of Light Construction*)

Structures were often framed with “green” wood: it was softer and easier to work, and the mortise-and-tenon joints in post-and-beam construction would shrink over time, adding strength to the frame as they tightened further.

The core samples were sanded and prepared for analysis under a microscope with a special sliding table that allowed extremely precise measurements of the width of each ring. The measurements were compared with other samples from the house, and then with regional master chronologies to find the best match.

Not every sample from the Gallants’ house had a sufficient number of rings to enable accurate comparisons, but a number showed consistent patterns indicating that they came from trees felled in 1794. Thus the earliest the structure would have been erected is the spring of 1795. A recently-discovered deed indicates that William Moore sold a parcel of land along what became Pepperrell Road to Pelatiah Fernald in July of 1794. Further records research may explain why George Wasson thought 1798 was the correct date. Or, perhaps Dave K can carve an asterisk for the plaque!

For a more detailed description of the dendrochronology process and analysis, see—

https://www.jlconline.com/projects/remodeling-historic-preservation/dating-historic-structures_o



PHOTO: DEAN GALLANT

In Memory of Bibb Longcrier

The Kittery Historical and Naval Society lost a great friend when Bibb Longcrier passed away on January 12, 2022. Bibb was elected to the board of trustees as president in 2003 and served for over 10 years. He and his wife, Karen, who served as secretary of the society, were quite a team. They were always the first to set up events and last to leave. Many people will remember Bibb as the coffee guy... two percolators, one at each end of the table, greeting everyone who attended programs and presentations.

Bibb's love for travel, coupled with his career in the military, took him and Karen to over 100 different countries. In addition to his role at the Historical Society, he was a Kiwanian, a life member DAV, a life member VFW, a life member USAF Sergeant's Association, a member of the Boston Computer Society, the Pease Greeters, and he was an ardent animal lover.

Bibb was a champion of Kittery's history for decades. One of Bibb's lasting legacies will be the monuments that enrich the front of the Museum. He would tell everyone who visited that these represented the "most hated war" and the "forgotten war." Bibb first explored making the monuments a reality in 1989 with little support from the community. But he would not be deterred, and in 1997 he once again took up the mission. This time with others, they formed a non-profit and began fundraising. The Kittery Korea Vietnam Veterans Monument Committee was formed. A motorcycle rally was held and by 2002 they were halfway to their goal. Other obstacles arose along the way, but he continued on with this most important project, working through each challenge. On Veterans Day 2005, 150 people gathered on the grounds of the Museum to see Bibb's dream come true, including a third stone representing all of the branches of the military. His determination in representing these veterans was inspirational.

Bibb was a good listener and a great re-teller of stories from our oldest members of the Society. The Museum has lost a great president, volunteer, and trustee, but his memory will live on both inside and outside the museum.



FIX IT GROUP, from page 1

For the next 17 years, from 1948 through 1965, on the second and fourth Thursday of each month anywhere from 16 to 18 senior ladies laden with bags, bundles, and boxes of clothing arrived at the home of Edna Prince (Mrs. Charles Prince, Sr.) at 15 Prince Avenue to spend the day repairing, mending, and packaging clothing items. The exception to this schedule was in July and August when they were relatively inactive.

Over the years the group received much clothing which was then stored in the barn of Mabel Fellows (Mrs. John Fellows) on Main Street, at the head of Otis Avenue. These articles were sorted and displayed on racks and tables in her garage, and all citizens in the town were welcomed in seeing or receiving items. As years progressed, public health nurses acted as welfare workers in Kittery and they had first choice of everything for local families.

Fix It Group's reach grows

From 1949 to early 1951 the group was given and repaired more articles than could be distributed locally so they turned to Great Britain. Several of the women had relatives or friends in England, Scotland, and Wales. The fine, appreciative letters received from Britain brought much pleasure to the group. Over the following years the Fix It Group expanded its distribution to the American Relief for Korea, Greenfell Mission in Labrador, International Rescue Committee in New York City, and the Church of World Wide Service. In Maine they sent items to the Clearing House in

From the Archives



PHOTO: DOUGLAS ARMISDEN

Spotlight on Collections

Who, What, Where

A group of Kittery residents formed a committee to plan something big!

Do you know who they were and why they were meeting?

Answer on page 8.

Portland; to Pineland at Pownal; to Dennysville and Grove in Washington County; and to John Russell, the 'Santa Claus' of Deer Isle. According to the records kept by Mrs. Prince through 1951, 1,265 articles of clothing were prepared for overseas shipment with an additional 3,385 articles prepared for domestic distribution. Included in those numbers were eighteen items sent to a company of US military members in Germany who had adopted children in an orphanage who ranged in age from three to 14 years.

Seventeen Years of Dedication

The work schedule for the semi-monthly meetings started with arrival at Mrs. Prince's home by 10:30 am, lunch at mid-day, and a full afternoon of mending. Over the 17 years, membership remained steady at about 17 ladies, despite two moving out of town and 12 who died, those being replaced with new members. Among those was the founder, Mrs. Harriet Fife, who was replaced by her daughter, Miss Hilda Fife, whose financial assistance to the group was much welcomed. One member, at first not in the 60 to 80 age range, was Mrs. Clayton Edwards who started by driving some of the women to the meetings and "got used to attending."

In addition to providing a beneficial service to those in need both in the US and abroad, Mrs. Prince was quoted in a 1965 newspaper interview as saying, "This group has not only helped many people in many places but it has been a marvelous help to those ladies themselves. For a group whose ages range from the over-sixties to the over-eighties, this interesting work with the sociability of meeting twice a month is a wonderful morale booster for those not so young."

The group eventually disbanded in 1965. Mrs. Prince's records in that year noted over 28,000 pieces of clothing, footwear, bedding, and other articles were fixed and distributed over the group's 17-year lifetime span.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Thomas Prince's grandmother was Edna Prince. Growing up in Kittery in the 1950s and early 1960s, Tom has clear memories of the Fix It Ladies gathering on Thursdays at his grandparents' home and the many boxes of clothing prepared for domestic and international shipping.



PHOTO: DOUGLAS ARMSDEN (COURTESY OF THOMAS PRINCE)

The Fix It ladies enjoy a cup of tea at a midafternoon break. Photographed in 1951 in Mrs. Prince's dining room are (seated, from left) Mrs. Harriet Fife, Mrs. Beatrice Teach, Mrs. Philip Webber, Mrs. Grace Edwards, Mrs. Alice Newson, Mrs. Alfred Davis (wife of Reverend Davis, pastor of the Second Methodist Church). Standing, Mrs. Edna Prince (reading a letter from a company of the USA Rifle Troops), Mrs. Georgina Williams, Mrs. Sadie Bowden, Mrs. Nelson (Hattie) Webber.



PRINCE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THOMAS PRINCE

One of the highlights for the ladies was their annual road trip to York Beach each June. These outings were held at a home belonging to Edna Prince's son, Charles Prince, Jr., which overlooked Nubble Lighthouse. This photo was taken in 1965, the last year for the Fix It Group. Seated, left to right: Miss Hilda Fife, Mrs. Mattie Pettigrew, Mrs. Mabel Fellows, and Mrs. Clayton Edwards. Front row, standing: Mrs. Winifred Parsons, Mrs. Dorcas Chandler, Mrs. Franklin Andrews, Mrs. Edna Prince, Mrs. Sadie Bowden and Mrs. W.G. Cash. Back row: Mrs. Paul Spinney, Mrs. Hattie Webber, Mrs. Beatrice Teach, and Mrs. Lutie Thompson. Also in the Fix It Group that year but not pictured: Mrs. Evangeline Bullard, Mrs. Florence Hersey, Mrs. Cora Clough, and Mrs. Viola Riley.

Of Interest to the Members of the Kittery Historical and Naval Society

Fix It member Hilda Fife was a past trustee of the Society. When the Museum opened in Kittery in 1976, Miss Fife had the honor of cutting the ribbon at the opening ceremony. Miss Fife, widely known as Dr. Hilda Fife, was professor *emerita* of the University of Maine in Orono upon her retirement in 1969 after 23 years of teaching at the University. She was also the founder of the Maine Old Cemetery Association and served as trustee of the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums.










Kittery Historical and Naval Society
 P.O. Box 453
 Kittery, ME 03904

COME ON DOWN OPEN HOUSE

April 2, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

For Local Residents

Come in, have a look around,
 learn how you can participate!

 <p>Ron-Bet Excavation 99 State Rd Kittery ME</p> <p>Tel. (207) 439-5868 Cell (207) 709-6646</p> <p>Ryan Chlek ryan@ronbet.com</p>	 <p>Kennebunk Savings BANKING · INSURANCE</p> <p>Proud to support the Kittery Historical & Naval Society!</p> <p>800.339.6573 • kennebunksavings.com Member FDIC</p>
<p>TIME TO SPRUCE UP YOUR HOME?</p>  <p>Ron-Bet Home Improvements Co. Inc. Established in 1937</p> <p>99 State Rd., Kittery, ME 207-439-5868 • ronbet.com</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Gutters  Windows  Awnings 	<p>Visit the Florist at Cole Gardens! www.floristatcolegardens.com 603-229-0655</p>  <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <p>COLE & GARDENS</p> </div> <p>SEND BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS ANYWHERE!</p>

Answer to Who, What, Where (p. 6): A photo from our Douglas Armsden Collection of a meeting of Kittery's 300th Anniversary Committee, taken about 1947. Some, but not all, of the names of the planning committee members are indicated on the photo. Front: Unidentified man, unidentified man, Alice Patey, Burnell Frisbee, Mrs. Allen Wiley, Mildred Gerry, unidentified man, Rosamond Thaxter. Rear: Mr. Philbrick, unidentified man, Ralph Dennett, Mr. Melhorn, William Dennett. (Object ID# 2019.21.359)