



Artifacts and Anchors

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



“A Nautical Noel”

KITTERY HISTORICAL AND NAVAL MUSEUM

HOLIDAY

OPEN HOUSE

THURS-FRI-SAT 10AM - 4PM

DEC. 8-9-10

Don't Miss the FUN!

Our Annual Open House is back after a two-year hiatus.

We are so pleased to be able to present this festive event, and an important fundraiser, once again. With the support of local businesses, there will be a silent auction and raffle. All prizes are awarded, and all donations support the museum in its effort to preserve and promote the history of Kittery.

RAFFLES!

- A pair of tickets from the Isles of Shoals Steamship Company
- Two \$100 gift certificates to the Kittery Trading Post
- \$100 gift certificate to Hamilton Marine
- Plus gift certificates to local restaurants that will feed you breakfast, lunch and dinner!

SILENT AUCTION!

- Themed baskets of fun collections for adults and children
- Paintings, rugs, and much more!

BOOK SIGNING!

By Lenaye Marsten, author of *The Secret Life of Mary White*; and Denise Brown, author of numerous children's books based on real local events.



THE BAKE SALE IS BACK!

Breads, cookies, bars, candy and more.

20% OFF IN OUR GIFT SHOP!

A chance to check off great gifts and books from your gift list.



Winter 2022

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Silent Auction

Raffle

Baked Goods

Book Signing

All Gift Shop Items-

20% OFF



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From the PRESIDENT

Greetings,

It's always with measures of sadness, anticipation, and gratitude that I approach the closing of our museum for the winter. It's always a little sad that it will be five months before we get to open the doors to visitors again.

The anticipation is for our off-season activities. The first of which is the preparation for and holding of our Holiday Open House. And the work continues in digitizing our collection, fulfilling research requests, working on our displays, and researching and entering data into our online Kittery History Portal.

I am gratified that we've completed another season of welcoming friends both old and new to the museum and of introducing or re-introducing them to Kittery's long and storied history. I'm thankful for our visitors who come from near and far to experience our history. I'm very thankful for our trustees and our volunteers who do the myriad of tasks that it takes to keep the museum running. And finally, I am thankful for all of you, our members. Without your support none of this would be possible.

So, please join us at the Holiday Open House and as the year ends, please consider an end-of-year donation to the Kittery Historical & Naval Society that will help us to continue the important work of collecting, stewarding and presenting Kittery's history.

Thank you,

Bob

Bob Gray

THE FAMILY LETTER

From our library:

MANNERS

Culture and Dress

IN THE

Best American Society

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

Family correspondence is a great social privilege as well as a great necessity. It brings together the divided members of the household, and, for the while, gives *home* a place in their hearts.

Women always write these best. They know how to pick up those little items of interest which are, after all, nearly the sum-total of home life, and which, by being carefully narrated, transport, for the time being, the recipient back to home and home interests.

Artifacts and Anchors is published quarterly by the Kittery Historical and Naval Society, P.O. Box 453, Kittery, ME 03904. 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).

BOARD OF TRUSTEES News

The annual Volunteers Luncheon was held at Warren's Lobster House on November 7th. Volunteers, society officers and many of the trustees attended. We can't thank our wonderful volunteers enough for the terrific job they do keeping the museum operating.

A special drop-in was held at the museum on September 30 to say good-bye to our former director, Kim Sanborn. A number of members and old acquaintances stopped by to wish her well in her new adventures.

The museum has hired Janet Fleming, one of our volunteers, to fill the new position of administrator, and she has already begun the job. Read more about Janet in this newsletter's "Volunteer Spotlight."

At the October Trustees' meeting, a motion was made to effect three changes to the KHNS bylaws. One was a housekeeping item to align the bylaws with a vote taken in June 2021 concerning the Program Committee. Instead of responsibility for arranging speakers/entertainment for four regular meetings of the Society annually, it was decided to have one annual meeting in

March or when agreed upon by the trustees.

The second motion proposed to change the language of who may be nominated to the board of trustees. Previously, persons nominated for trustee were to "have served as volunteers in some capacity for one year prior to consideration by the Search Committee." The new language would strike that requirement, making anyone in good standing from the general membership eligible for nomination.

The third motion proposed changes to the two classes of Trustee, replacing "Active" and "Associate" Members of the Board with "Active" and "Emeritus" Members. The new designation of Emeritus shall be non-voting. They are entitled to attend meetings, and participate in the affairs of the Corporation as the Board may determine from time-to-time, but once elected, Emeritus Members are exempt from Active requirements.

All three motions were passed by the Board. A meeting of the membership will be called in December to ratify the changes to the bylaws.

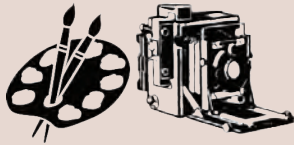


The Winter of 1917-1918

This J. Frank Walker photograph of the frozen Piscataqua River is graphic evidence of the severe cold that gripped not only Kittery, but much of the rest of the United States during the winter of 1917-1918. For a first-hand account of a frozen Pepperrell Cove and harbor, see our reprint of a 1994 Artifacts article by Joe Phillips, page 7.

Artists of Kittery Series

George Savary Wasson



SERIES ON KITTERY ARTISTS

Blessed with a beautiful and varied shoreline, Kittery has attracted artists for many years. Artifacts and Anchors would like to celebrate some of Kittery's artistic residents in the next few issues.

The KHNS is planning an exhibit in Summer 2023 of the photographic works of Douglas Armsden, who lived and worked in Kittery Point and chronicled Kittery's beauty, residents, occupations, and events in all seasons. Trustee Janice Farmer has been curating a generous gift from Armsden's daughters of photos and negatives of Kittery, predominantly from the 1940s to 1970s. Together with Armsden's daughter Beverly Daniels, Janice has been working to select and present photos for an exhibit at the Kittery Community Center, planned for May through August, 2023. Of particular interest at the exhibit will be photos taken at celebrations of the town's 300th anniversary of incorporation in 1947. In addition, the Portsmouth Athenaeum has generously offered the chance to consult their Armsden collection for Kittery-related photos.

Our spring issue will feature more about the life and work of Douglas Armsden. In this issue we have decided to feature an earlier Kittery Point artist, George Savary Wasson, whose home was just across Fernald Cove from Douglas Armsden's.

George Savary Wasson—painter, author, carver, sailor—lived and worked in Kittery Point from 1888 until 1916, and then in Bangor until his death in 1932. Although relatively unknown today, during his lifetime he was well known and admired for his work by some of the leading literary and artistic figures of the time. William Dean Howells promoted Wasson's writing, helped introduce his short stories to the *Atlantic Monthly*, and encouraged him to produce his three novels *Cap'n Simeon's Store*, *The Green Shay*, and *Home from Sea*. Howells introduced Wasson to Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), who praised one of Wasson's short stories ('Rusticators at the Cove') as the funniest he had ever read. Wasson's novels capture stories and tales he learned from working mariners in his many years sailing from Cape Ann and up the Maine coast, and chronicle a way of speaking no longer heard along our shores. A marine painter, Wasson's paintings were exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Boston Art Club. He was well known to the Ogunquit group of painters—Marcia Oakes Wood-



George S. Wasson and his wife, Amelia, pictured in Kittery Point, circa early 1900s.

bury was an illustrator for his novels. Henry James, visiting William Dean Howells, made a special visit to meet Wasson. Wasson's last book, *Sailing Days on the Penobscot*, co-authored with Lincoln Colcord, is considered the authoritative book on the history of sail on the Maine coast. Today, Wasson's paintings and sketchbooks are in the permanent collections of the Peabody Essex Museum, the Farnsworth Museum, the Maine Maritime Museum, and the Mystic Seaport Museum.

Born in 1855 in Groveland, Massachusetts, George Wasson was the son of an independent-thinking



The Wreck of the Polly by G.S. Wasson. Beached at Fort McClary on December 7, 1890, the *Polly* was repaired and sailed again for many years. (Private collection)

minister and writer, David Atwood Wasson, who was himself influenced and befriended by the Transcendentalists of Concord, Massachusetts. The Wasson family lived for a time as tenants of Henry David Thoreau and it has been reported that George Wasson recalled a day when their kitchen pump was repaired by Thoreau. Although he was born, raised, and educated in Massachusetts, George Wasson spent his summers at the home of his grandfather, a shipbuilder in Brooksville, Maine, where he learned his love of the sea and sailing. David Wasson recognized that his son's talents were more artistic than academic and rather than send him to college (the usual course for a young man of his class at the time), he took him to Stuttgart, Germany for three years to study painting. On his return from Europe, Wasson settled in Boston and began his career as a painter. He studied at the studio of J. Foxcroft Cole, a mentor to many "Boston school" artists. Wasson was a member of the St. Botolph Club, where he would have mingled with artists such as Daniel Chester French, John Singer Sargent, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. His paintings were exhibited at the Boston Art Club along with other seacoast artists such as Frank Benson and Edmund Tarbell. In 1883 he had a one-man show at the Chase Galleries in Boston, where he exhibited 32 paintings—only two of which dealt with non-maritime scenes. Wasson's marine paintings were successful, especially with sailors, because they were informed by Wasson's intimate knowledge of

boats, rigging, and how boats looked and acted in the sea.

He continued to sail the New England coast, and in 1885 he met and married his wife Amelia Webb at Isle au Haut. In 1888 Wasson moved to Kittery Point, where he lived with his wife and raised their two sons, Lewis and David. His first home, purchased in 1888, was the '1798 House' on Pepperrell Cove. However, not too many years after he moved in, the PK&Y trolley would have begun its daily rumbles down tracks less than 10 feet from his living room and Wasson built a 3 story, gambrel-roofed home on the bluff overlooking both Pepperrell and Fernald Coves. His studio was on the third floor. He and his wife raised their two sons, Lewis Talcott (1889-1912) and David Arnold (1887-1915) in their home on the bluff.

Wasson spent some time at the carving studio of Kittery Point neighbor John Haley Bellamy where he learned to carve and produced eagles, ship models, and frames and panels for his own paintings. He became friendly with William Dean Howells, also a neighbor, who encouraged his writing and introduced him (and his work) to other influential writers of the day. A story



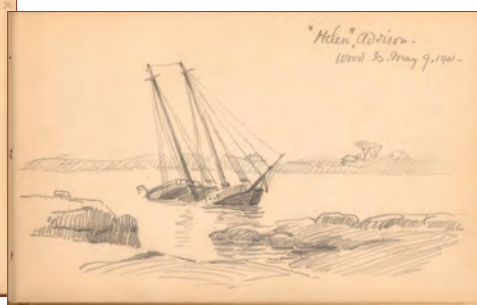
Three Lumber Schooners at the Mouth of the Kennebec River, George S. Wasson, 1880.

is told of a day when "...Wasson, decked out in overalls with a sloppy paintbrush in his hand, knocked off work on his sloop at Kittery Point to receive a visit from the elegantly clad and utterly astonished Henry James..."*

Wasson lived, painted, carved, sailed, and wrote in Kittery Point until the tragic deaths of his sons—Lewis in 1912 and David in 1915. In 1915, Wasson moved to Bangor with his wife and his daughter-in-law (David's wife) Mildred Coes Wasson, where he continued to live until his death in 1932. Wasson's last work was his book *Sailing Days on the Penobscot*, which he did not live to see in print. Wasson's wife Amelia and daughter-in-law Mildred later returned to Kittery Point to live in the Bray House. In 1943, Amelia christened the US Navy Liberty ship, *George S. Wasson*.

Wasson's paintings still grace the walls of many museums and homes in Kittery and the seacoast area and his books are now again available via the internet. The Pontine Theater has produced plays based on stories in his books, and there have been several exhibits over the past years of his paintings. Wasson's star is again rising and his talents have assured him a place in the history of the arts of Kittery.

* "Down East with George Savary Wasson" by Cecil D. Eby Jr., *Down East* magazine, April 1967.



Pages from Wasson's sketchbooks depicting Whale Back light and the wreck of "Helen" at Wood Island, May 9, 1901. (VFM 966, Manuscripts Collection, G.W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc.)

VOLUNTEER Spotlight

Members and friends who visited the museum this past summer may have enjoyed chatting with Janet Fleming, a Kittery native who volunteered at the museum on Wednesday afternoons as a front desk docent (along with trustee David Morrison). We are pleased to say that Janet will be back again—in fact is back—but this time in her new role as museum administrative assistant.

As the museum's long-serving director Kim Sanborn begins her new life away from the museum and the many "hats" she wore, Janet begins her new role: taking on museum administrative tasks and working with the president and trustees on museum and historical society events, projects, and programs.

We spoke with Janet at the museum where she has been working with trustees Jeanne Voorhees, Ron Ames, Barbara Estes, and Karen Longcrier on the museum's Holiday Open House—"A Nautical Noel"—on Dec. 8, 9, & 10. The museum was beginning to look very festive and the displays of donated goods for the sale and auction were very

tempting. Janet was also busy setting up the museum for a special viewing of a film for guests.

Janet said that although she's lived here all her life and has always been interested in Kittery history, she'd not been in the museum until last year. She saw an ad for the museum Open House (for volunteers) in early spring 2022. What she saw at the museum so impressed her that she signed up right away to help, and began working as a docent in spring 2022. She realized very quickly that she already knew or had connections with many of the trustees and volunteers at the museum.

Janet's family are a part of Kittery's history (she is Doc Shapleigh's great-granddaughter) and she is delighted with the way Kittery history is presented at the museum, especially the film narrated by Joe Frost and the slide show "Kittery, Then and Now."

Janet grew up on Government Street in her grandparents' home and attended the Dennett and Frisbee Schools, and



Volunteer Janet Fleming.

Traip Academy. Although she moved to Portsmouth with her NH attorney husband, she said she has always considered herself a Kittery citizen.


She would like to see more Kittery residents visit the museum—"If you haven't seen it, you have to come visit this gem!" Janet has a love of Kittery history and looks forward to helping to make it available to all. When you see her at the museum, be sure to say "hello."



Spotlight on Collections

A well-attended banquet, with a head table in the background seating many dignitaries. Do you know the Kittery connection for this November 11, 1924 event? Answer on page 8.

Please consider making an end-of-the-year gift to the Kittery Historical and Naval Society so that we may continue our work of preserving Kittery's history for everyone to enjoy now and in the future. Any amount is appreciated. NEW! You can now donate online from our website: kitterymuseum.com. Just click the donate button.



Kittery Historical and Naval Society

P. O. Box 453, Kittery, Maine 03904-0453

Here is my end-of-the-year gift ... keep up the good work!


Name _____

Street _____

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Amount Enclosed _____

Thank You!



(The Kittery Historical & Naval Society is a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organization ...
donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.)

**Winters Past: From Artifacts
Newsletter for the Kittery
Historical Society,
February 1994**

**"WINTER • Brrr
BY JOE PHILLIPS**

The winter of 1917-1918 was very cold. World War I was raging and there were soldiers stationed at Fort Foster. They were sleeping in tents with a wooden floor and a small conical stove in each tent.

Standing on Frisbees coal wharf (the present town wharf) no open water could be seen—even beyond Whale Back light. A chum and I walked from Frisbees Wharf to the Coast Guard Station at Wood Island outside of the buoy at Fishing Island with no thought of being unsafe. From our house, we used to watch a couple who lived on Gooseberry Is. walking to Hoyts Is., for a month or more, to play cards with the Arthur Hutchins family. We would see their lantern at about six in the evening and then at about ten o'clock they would go back home.

Several wharfs at Kittery Point were de-

stroyed by the ice. The largest was what we called the "Long Pier." It extended in a S.W. direction from the old store about 250' and had a branch pier to the Parkfield Hotel. It was totally destroyed and never rebuilt.

The R.R. bridge from Newington to Dover Point, and also the Portsmouth to Kittery bridge were both badly damaged by ice coming down from Great Bay. Both bridges carried trains and vehicular traffic.

The Navy Yard to Portsmouth ferry – 1048 – was caught in mid river by the ice and the passengers walked ashore on planks for safety as the tide in the Piscataqua River is about 8-9 miles per hour. It's hard to believe the river could freeze over. The beach at Sea Point was covered with large ice bergs which lasted until spring.

The cold weather started in November and continued through February. Don't know the lowest temperature but don't think it got as low as it did in 1932-33 when it registered 32 below.

Pepperrell Cove and Chaucey Creek have frozen over in later years, and the Coast Guard has broken the ice around

the boats on several occasions, but there was never a winter in my memory like 1917-18.

JOE PHILLIPS has lived in Kittery Point all of his 92 years. We are lucky to have him share his fine memories of by-gone days with us.

(Reprinted from the February 1994 Artifacts)



**From the Biddeford Journal,
Granville O. Berry's column, 1912:**

January 19 -The electric road was hard hit on Monday by the storm and the car schedule was somewhat demoralized during the greater part of the day. But one mail was received and that was not until after four o'clock.

February 2 -The local ice dealers are harvesting a fine crop of ice this week. Mr. Cutts has hired the large ice house of Frisbee Brothers, which he will fill in addition to his own.



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Answer to Who, What, Where (p. 6): On Nov. 11, 1924, nearly 500 people attended a banquet held in the Navy Yard reading room following a ceremony held in John Paul Jones Park, to dedicate the new state memorial to Maine's soldiers, sailors and marines of the World War. (That day the memorial was unfinished, still needing the bas-relief sculpture by Bashka Paeff which would be installed in 1926.) In attendance were Governor Baxter of Maine, Maine's U.S. senators and representatives, and N.H. Gov. Brown. Also, leaders of many organizations including American Legion, Women's Relief Corps., and Red Cross. After the banquet, yard commander Capt. D.E. Dismukes offered tours of the shipyard to the guests. Photo by Fairfield Studio, Boston. Object# 93.103.1