



Artifacts and Anchors

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



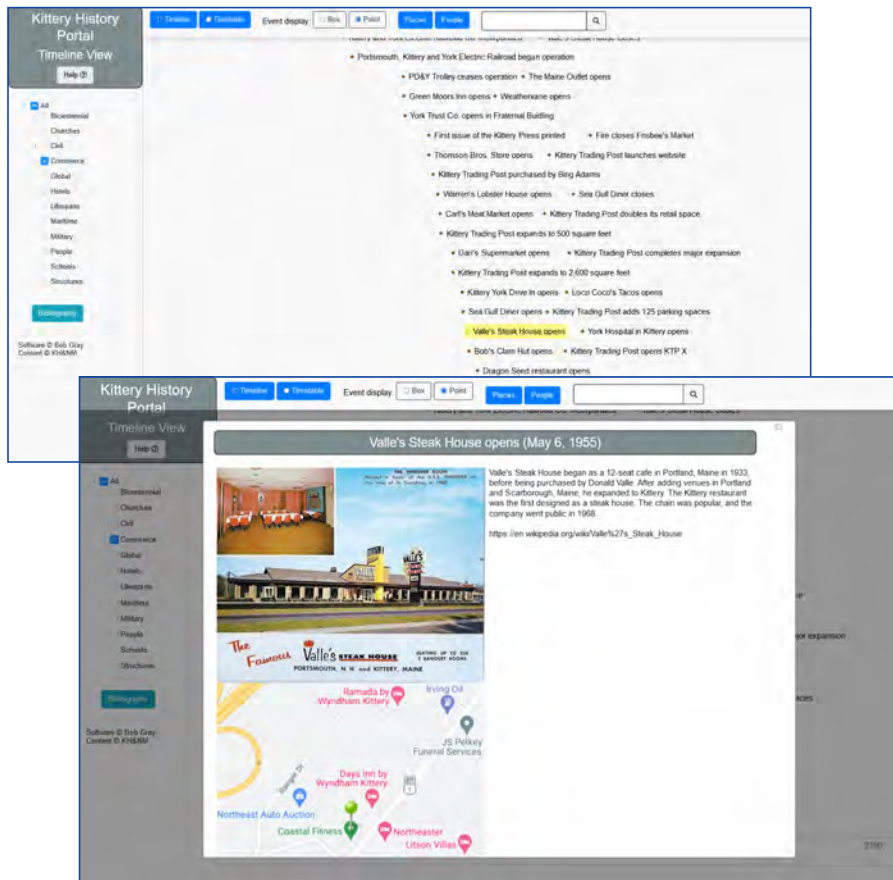
Have You Tried the Kittery History Portal? It's a One-Stop-Shop for Kittery History

By Bob Gray

Early in my involvement with the Kittery Historical & Naval Society, I realized that along with a great collection of artifacts in the Museum, we also had a huge amount of information that is housed in the Museum—most of it on paper. Having acquired some skills in database and web development, I began to explore the possibilities of digitizing that information and making it easily accessible—a “one-stop-shop” for Kittery history. The result is the Kittery History Portal.

Development on the Portal started in 2017 and it was first available in the Museum in 2018. Today it is available on the web at <http://kitterymuseum.com/portal>.

The original iteration of the Kittery History Portal was a simple, web-based timeline that would provide a graphical representation of the sequence of events of Kittery’s history. As development progressed, the database and webpage were expanded to hold data about historic places and people in Kittery. With that



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expansion completed, we now have a solid platform for archiving and cross-referencing information about events, people and places. Further expansion of the Portal could include information about historic artifacts with cross-references to their related events, locations and people.

The Portal presently contains information about:

- 543 Events
- 370 Locations, including 140 cemeteries.
- 7086 people who are interred or were prominent in Kittery, including 591 veterans.

While we have a useful amount of data presently in the Portal, there is much more information about the past that is left to be compiled and entered. If you would like to be involved in further development, entering data, or if you have suggestions about the Portal, please contact the Museum.



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From the PRESIDENT

Spring Greetings,

Although it's snowing as I am writing this, I know that spring will be here soon. As spring approaches we're preparing for opening the Museum for the season. We do not yet have an opening date, so watch your email and our website at kitterymuseum.com.

One of what feels like a thousand things to care for in preparation for opening is the organizing of our docents and other volunteers. Our docents are those who welcome our guests, show them around the museum and work our gift shop. The times that the museum is open is dependent on the availability of docents and trustees.

There is a wide range of other opportunities for volunteering both inside and outside the walls of the Museum. These include maintaining our building and grounds, working on exhibits, cataloging and organizing our collections, doing historical research, identifying and applying for grants, and preparing and presenting historical programs. If you have other ways you think that you could contribute to our efforts to preserve and present Kittery's history, please let us know.

If you have previously contacted us about volunteering, we will be in touch with you soon about an orientation meeting. If you have not previously contacted us and are interested in volunteering, please email us at kitterymuseum@netzero.net or call the museum at 207-439-3080.

Historically yours,

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

**TOILETTE RECIPES:
TO REMOVE WRINKLES**

Melt white wax one ounce to gentle heat, and add juice of lily bulbs two ounces and honey two ounces, rose-water two drachms and attar of roses a drop or two. Use twice a day.

Use tepid water instead of cold in ablutions. Put some powder of best myrrh upon an iron plate sufficiently heated to melt the gum gently, and when it liquefies cover your head with a napkin and hold your face over the myrrh at a proper distance to receive the fumes without inconvenience. Do not use if it causes headache.

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.org 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).

Remembering KH&NS Trustee Ron Ames, 1941-2023

Ron Ames was a collector—of Victorian memorabilia, of facts and lore, of friends. People gravitated toward him, swept into conversations as he imparted little-known but fascinating facts from ancient Egyptians and Queen Victoria to Broadway shows and Kittery, Maine. His contributions to the Kittery Historical and Naval Society were myriad. Kim Sanborn, the retired director of the museum run by the KH&NS, estimates that 80% of the displays in the Garrison Room are products of Ron's creativity, imagination, or donation. She says Ron would acquire an object tied to Kittery history and quietly unlock a display case, rearrange the contents to include his newest find, then wait for her to discover the addition.

Ron graduated from MacMasters University and Ontario College of Art, and taught high school art and drama for ten years. In 1976, he moved to New York City and became immersed in the theatre scene, where he created props, costumes, and masks for Broadway shows as well as print and film advertising. He made armor for the musical *Camelot*, wild headdresses for other shows, a wacky Christmas egg costume for Cadbury, and worked with the Muppets.

Ron kept his Canadian citizenship, but when his lifetime partner, Frank Frisbee, came home to his roots to work with family store and restaurant, Ron set down new roots here. They established a B&B on Pepperrell Road, and were involved with the much-loved Cap'n Simeon's Galley. Ron created the menus and cooked the food. He and Frankie became active members of the KH&NS. The museum's model of William Pepperrell is true to his portrait, right down to the buttons on his velvet jacket—all constructed by Ron and



Ron in his Twelve Days of Christmas sweater.

Frankie. Ron connected to theatre companies in the area, constructing props and furnishings for productions. Greg Gathers, co-Artistic Director at Pontine Theatre, calls Ron their historical consultant. Ron teamed KH&NS with the Pontine to raise money for the museum, and arranged performers for programs at Society meetings.

After Cap'n Simeon's closed, Ron kept right on cooking at home. He delighted in planning meals around holidays, tying food to the occasion—Italian for (formerly) Columbus day, then beans, corn and turkey for Indigenous Peoples Day. One President's Day, he made mac and cheese, noting that the dish was introduced to the U.S. by Thomas Jefferson (Ron did love imparting his obscure, but fun, facts!). Not only did he cook for himself, he cooked up "food" for museum exhibits. The "Old Hotels" display has some salvaged china from the early 20th century Kittery Point resort hotels, one plate holding a realistic stack of syrup-topped pancakes crafted by Ron.

When the society had a booth at the Community Market or Kittery Block Party, Ron was there. He'd catch a passerby's eye and begin a conversation about Kittery history, lobstering, art, and the next thing people knew, they

were buying a book or a raffle ticket or taking out a membership in KH&NS. Ron was a fixture at the museum's front desk, too. The museum tour is self-directed, but Ron's showmanship emerged as he often regaled visitors with stories connected to the exhibits.

Ron's creativity is evident all around the museum. He created miniature Kittery-history figures for the gift shop, making the molds, pouring in plaster, then painting the individual features. The *USS Constitution* had three different figureheads; Ron reproduced them for the *USS Constitution* exhibit. He made dozens of ornaments for the annual Christmas tree, including a 3-inch Bellamy eagle with a Merry Christmas banner. His apple head dolls sold out in days. For historic Kittery exhibits, Ron made trollies, a small horse-drawn snow roller to match the real one, and well-researched, authentic clothing for the Native American and settler figures.

Ron may not be with us in person any more, but his creativity and talent live on in many of the exhibits at the Kittery Historical & Naval Society.

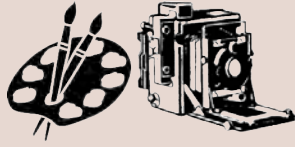
—Jeanne Vorhees



A life-size figure of Sir William Pepperrell, impeccably costumed by the talented Ron Ames.

Artists of Kittery Series

Douglas Armsden



SERIES ON KITTERY ARTISTS

Our featured artist this issue is Douglas Armsden, in anticipation of our exhibit May 15 to August 31 in the Morgan Gallery of the Kittery Community Center.

Photographer
Douglas J. Armsden
Capturing Kittery 1930s to 1990s



Get Ready!

A show of work by beloved Kittery Point photographer Douglas J. Armsden will run from May 15 to August 31, 2023 at the Kittery Community Center, Morgan Gallery.

Many Kittery residents have treasured Douglas Armsden photographs of family members, weddings, boats, houses, and Kittery scenes. He is remembered with affection and gratitude for loving images of precious people, events, and places. Looking through town and state agency promotional materials for events and tourism, many of the best photos come from the Armsden camera. The Kittery Historical and Naval Society is pleased to be able to present this show curated by Janice Farmer, Trustee, of works by this important Kittery artist.

Douglas J. Armsden was born in England in 1918, first son of Cyril and Mabel Armsden. The family immigrated to Buffalo, NY when Douglas was a small child. He attended Buffalo schools and completed a commercial art program at Buffalo Technical High School, where he learned to use the camera and began his lifelong career behind the lens.

In 1936, the Armsden family moved to Whipple Road in Kittery, where Cyril Armsden had accepted a position at the Navy Yard. Douglas, at the urging of a former teacher, “hung his shingle” as a professional photographer. In 1937, he won the

grand prize of the Portland Telegram Candid Camera contest, and accepted a position at the *Kittery Press* with Horace Mitchell.

WWII interrupted his Kittery career. He left to serve in the Pacific on the *USS Bayfield*, and to participate in both the Iwo Jima and Okinawa operations. He carried his camera with him into the Pacific and left a remarkable photographic documentation of his service.

Returning to Kittery after the war in 1946, he resumed his professional life behind the camera. In 1947, the town of Kittery prepared for its 300th anniversary and engaged Armsden to photograph the Tercentenary celebrations. One of the photographs he took was of the lovely Alice Decatur, who was in Kittery that summer visiting her grandparents, modelling an 18th-century gown belonging to Lady Mary Pepperrell. Alice Decatur and Douglas Armsden were married in 1948. They settled in Kittery Point and raised three daughters, Beverley, Gay, and Catherine.

Over the years Douglas became one the area's best known photographers. Chambers of Commerce, local businesses, Maine and New Hampshire state agencies, and the Ship Yard all used his photographs for brochures and publicity. He recorded local events—water skiing competitions, historic pageants and parades, ship launchings, storms and weather, people and businesses, buildings and houses—for various local press and publications. His work was

exhibited in galleries in York and Portsmouth. Residents asked him to record weddings, parties, boats, and their homes.

Douglas and Alice continued to live in their family home overlooking Fernald Cove until Alice's death in 2006, and Douglas's in 2009. Though their daughters have married and left Kittery, they keep a summer home on Fernald Cove to return each year with their families.

The Kittery Historical and Naval Society are very grateful to Beverly Armsden Daniels, Gay Armsden, and Catherine Armsden for their gift of the prints and negatives of their father's work, and for their support of the upcoming exhibit of Armsden's Kittery photographs.

"Photographer Douglas J. Armsden: Capturing Kittery 1930s to 1990s" has been generously underwritten by a grant from Kennebunk Savings Bank.

—Lauren Gallant



Douglas Armsden took this pastoral scene of Will Raynes at his Kittery Point farm near the salt marsh at Sea Point.



Armsden's photo of the USS Bayfield at anchor in Long Beach, California—the ship he served on in the Pacific during WWII.



DOUGLAS ARMSDEN





Spotlight on Collections Who, What, Where

A popular stop for north-bound travellers going through Kittery, and a destination after Traip Academy dances. Where was it located, and why were there 2 large signs with directions to Valle's Steak House?

ANSWER: Page 6



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Answer to Who, What, Where (p. 5): Valle's Snack Bar was on the northbound side of the Route 1 By-pass in the 1960s where Port Harbor Marine is now located—across the street and slightly south of Valle's Steak House (the current home of Coastal Fitness). Because there was a continuous median separating the northbound and southbound lanes, it was impossible for northbound cars to turn left into the much larger Valle's Steak House. Valle's Snack Bar captured some of the northbound traffic, but it also allowed motorists to exit the rear of the property onto Old Post Road, make a loop under the Bypass on Rte. 103, and enter the Valle's Steak House rear parking lot. Object 2019.21.