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• 04-04-08 South Portland: A Call to Action
• 03-28-08 An Early South Portland Football Team
• 03-21-08 Sam Silverman’s Willard Beach Attractions
• 03-14-08 Ask An Expert – Historical and Genealogical Research
• 03-07-08 Thornton Heights Stores
• 02-29-08 An Early Ferry Village Bakery
• 02-22-08 Matrons’ Literary Club
• 02-15-08 Join Us! An Afternoon of Comedy
• 02-08-08 Captain Daniel Willard – “Mr. Lincoln”
• 02-01-08 Sam Silverman’s Popcorn Stand and the Dory
• 01-25-08 United Order of the Golden Cross
• 01-18-08 Admiral Robert E. Peary
• 01-11-08 Arthur Lailer, Grocer
• 01-04-08 South Portland Ice Houses
12-26-08 St. John the Evangelist Church

The accompanying photograph shows St. John the Evangelist Church at 611 Main Street, shortly after its construction. This parish originally held its meetings in the Calvary Chapel in Calvary Cemetery, dating back to 1866. That small memorial chapel was fine for services in the earlier years, but as the population grew on the western side of South Portland, the congregation outgrew the small chapel building, thus the need for a larger church. This building on Main Street was constructed in 1940 and the congregation moved to its new, larger home. As need arose, additions to the church building were constructed in the 1950s.

12-19-08 Hill Top Tea Room

In recent years, it seems that a number of entrepreneurs in neighboring communities have seen the appeal of tea rooms and tea shops - South Portland had its own “tea room” back in the 1940s. I’ll bet most readers will recognize the building in the accompanying photo, now home to the Buttered Biscuit on Cottage Road. In the photo, the newly-built Hill Top Tea Room had replaced the former small wooden building on the site which had been run by William L. Milesen as an ice cream shop. Milesen built the larger building to expand the operation. In 1947, Stewart Call was running the shop, not just a tea shop, but also serving lunches, Italian sandwiches and still serving up the homemade ice cream. In the 1950s, Lloyd Johnson took over the operation and it was renamed the Hill Top Coffee Shop – presumably serving more coffee than tea, but the doughnuts, pastries and homemade ice cream remained.

12-12-08 Jimmie’s Specialty Market

The accompanying photo is a great example of how images of South Portland’s earlier businesses can be hard to come by. Jimmie’s Specialty Market existed from roughly 1972 to 1980, and I doubt that many people who bought sandwiches and pizza ever brought a camera with them. In fact, this building at 562 Main Street has seen grocers as early as 1925 (Clarence E. Goff, grocer). It was home to First National Stores from the early 1930s to late 1940s, then Fehlau’s Hardware from the 1950s to early 1960s. The building use switched to pizza shops around 1963 with The Pizza House, The Pizza Store and Langella’s Pizza House. There were quite a few other store fronts there over the years as well, and yet we have not seen photos of any of those stores. So, for those of you who remember eating one of Jimmy’s Famous Meat Ball Sandwiches – enjoy!

12-05-08 Evans Street School

The accompanying photograph is an image of the old Evans Street School , located at 132 Evans Street . It is one of only a very few images we are aware of that have been preserved of the old school. Over the last several decades, I have always known the site as the dirt-and-grass patch on the easterly side of Evans (across from Jennies Court ). The school was in use in the late 1800s through the 1950s and for much of its existence, was the neighborhood school for students in 1st through 4th or 5th grades. Most years, there were two multi-age classrooms. By the early 1950s, only a 3rd and/or 4th grade was housed at the school. The last class attending is believed to have been a 5th grade class in 1957-1958. After 1958, the Evans Street School never saw classes again, but was used instead as a storage building by the city until circa 1975 when the building was demolished.

We hope that some readers out there may have some images of the school or of class photos. Please contact the Society at 347-4137 or sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com if you have anything to share.

11-28-08 Merchants Marine Railway
South Portland has a long history in the shipbuilding business. In more recent times we talk about the WWII shipyards, but our shipbuilding history started long before that. The accompanying photograph is a great illustration of that past. The image comes from the Dyer collection at South Portland Historical Society and shows a ship being launched from the Marine Railway in Ferry Village. The Dyer family included a long line of shipbuilders in South Portland. Nathan Dyer and his son, Nathan Randall Dyer, both served as superintendent of the Merchants Marine Railway on the South Portland waterfront in the 1800s. Nathan Randall Dyer's son, Frank, also worked for the Marine Railway.

South Portland Historical Society maintains a research office at City Hall that is open on Wednesdays from 10am to noon, or other times by appointment. The society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, funded primarily through membership dues and donations from local residents. For more information on recent society news and upcoming programs, link to our website through www.southportland.org. The Window on the Past history columns are archived on the website.

11-21-08 The Seasons of Thanks and Giving
When Thanksgiving arrives, we all start thinking of things we are grateful for and our historical society is no exception. We are so grateful to the residents of South Portland, Cape Elizabeth and surrounding communities who have played such a wonderful part in the growth of South Portland's historical society. Our membership ranks have swelled to over 450 members – and continues to grow. With the society on the verge of acquiring a new home, it is exciting to think about the prospect of a community asset that will be able to be enjoyed by all. We are thankful to the Portland Pipe Line Corporation, our very civic-minded friend and neighbor, for sharing our vision and working with us to make this possible, and to the City of South Portland for helping the society reach a place where we can exhibit South Portland's history, preserve important pieces of history, and use our City's rich history as a launching point in educational programming.

While we do stop and give thanks, we still have a lot of hard work ahead of us to reach our goal of establishing our permanent home and opening its doors. We are counting on the community to continue to be a part of this worthwhile project - we can all feel great about this legacy that we are creating for South Portland. If you are not yet a member, please join! Membership applications are available at City Hall or online at www.southportland.org. If you could help with a donation to our capital campaign, please clip out the form below. If you are doing some holiday shopping, stop by our office or call us at 347-4137 – we have historical books, DVDs, cookbooks and other items for purchase, with proceeds going to the society. We also still have a limited number of Paul Black art prints available for pick-up or they can be shipped to a loved one. There are many ways to be a part of your historical society this holiday season, and together we can accomplish great things. Happy Holidays to you!

11-14-08 Evening Chat: South Portland's Sardine Factories
On Thursday, November 20th, the South Portland Historical Society will conclude its 2008 Evening Chat series with a program entitled, “The Sardine Industry of Portland and South Portland in the 1900s.” In earlier days, the sardine factory horns were part of everyday life. These whistles would alert workers that the herring boat had come in with its catch and it was time to come to work. Indeed, sardine canning factories once abounded along the Maine coast, and have gradually closed over the years leaving only one factory still in operation in Maine today.

This photograph was provided by Janice Willard Huelin and shows a group of sardine workers in 1933 at the Seaboard Packing Company, 231 Front Street. We have tried to determine who the workers are by writing on the back of the picture. If you recognize anyone in the photo, please call the Society or plan to attend this program so that we might learn more. Some of the names we have are Edith, Helen and Audrey Archibald, Natalie and Helen Willard, and Willis Upton. One former worker, Rita Devine Preston, remembers how she went to work for the company around 1933 at the age of 15; this was during the
Depression and times were hard. Rita would go to school in the morning and she received a permit to allow her to work at the canning factory in the afternoon. “I made $2.50 a week and gave the biggest part to my parents,” she says.

Evening Chats are oral history discussion events that are taped by SPC-TV for preservation and for broadcast at a later date. This event will take place at South Portland City Hall in the Council Chambers. Participants are welcome to arrive at 6:15pm for light refreshments and a chance to meet other participants; the Chat will begin promptly at 6:30pm with a documentary film about the early sardine industry and the Brawn Company, a sardine canning factory in Portland owned and operated by the Brawn family of Cushing’s Point, South Portland. The film will be followed by a slide show of images of South Portland’s sardine factories in Ferry Village, followed by open discussion among participants who either worked in, or lived near, the local sardine factories. Whether you have a first-hand account to share, or if you just want to come and listen, everyone is welcome to attend.

The 2008 Evening Chat Series is a program of the South Portland Historical Society, made possible with the support of the Maine Humanities Council, and in collaboration with South Portland Community Television.

11-07-08 Reynolds School

Not that distant a memory for many in South Portland, Reynolds School on Broadway (near today’s Amato’s store) was still being used as a school building in the early 1970s. Originally built as the Pleasantdale School, the building was designed by architect Austin Pease and was known for much of its history as the Summer Street School. Of course, it was called the Summer Street School as that was the former name for Broadway in that part of South Portland. In later years, the school was renamed Reynolds School in honor of Judge Edward C. Reynolds, a former South Portland School Board member, State Senator, as well as our city’s first mayor.

Reynolds School was typically used for higher grades. Prior to 1952, when South Portland didn’t have a junior high school, Reynolds (or Summer Street School) was used for grades 5 through 8, or sometimes just grades 7 and 8. The grade levels would depend on city-wide enrollments and school building capacities. After the opening of South Portland Junior High, Reynolds was used just for grades 5 and 6.

Thanks to Society member Ron Jenkins for sending in the photo of his 5th grade class – the teacher was Mrs. McPhee. When a new Helena H. Dyer School opened in September 1972, it replaced both the former Dyer School as well as the Reynolds School. The school building was later torn down and replaced by the Old Schoolhouse Apartments, at 1080 Broadway.

10-31-08 Ice Harvesting at Hinckley Park

South Portland residents have had many years to enjoy the beauty of Hinckley Park, but the land wasn’t always a park. In the 1800s, the land lots stretched from Highland Avenue to Sawyer Street and you can still see evidence of long stone walls on the land. The Dyers had a large farm on Sawyer that stretched through that parcel. And in the 1900s, Howard Knight had a big parcel on Highland Avenue and was farming much of the land.

The ponds at Hinckley were harvested in winter as well. Prior to electric refrigerators, household ice deliveries were a part of everyday life. In the mid 1910s, Howard Knight was listed as an ice dealer on Highland Avenue, harvesting ice from the pond behind his house.
The larger operation shown in the photo was that of the City Ice & Fuel Company. The company created a road through what is now Wild Rose Avenue to reach the ice house. The business incorporated in 1926 and was run by the Lamport family into the mid 1950s. The Lamports had previously operated the Deering Ice Company in Portland. George, Jacob, Ralph and Henry Lamport - all were involved first at Deering Ice and later at City Ice & Fuel in some capacity during the company’s existence. The business maintained locations on Ocean Street and also at 410 Broadway.

If you have more information to share on this topic, please contact the South Portland Historical Society by phone at 767-7299 or by email at sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com.

10-24-08 King Cole Potato Chips

King Cole Foods, maker of King Cole potato chips, potato sticks, cheese corn, and seasoned popcorn, was one of several potato chip manufacturers in South Portland in the mid-1900s. The business was originally run by Norman Cole and John Hayes, Jr., and began in a building at 609 Main Street on the corner of Thirlmere Avenue, as shown in the accompanying photo, around 1945-1946. The company’s predecessor was the Winslow Chip Company, which was run by Norman Cole at that same location.

The business moved circa 1947 to a larger facility at 174 Cash Street on the corner of Hunnewell Street. Norman Cole left the business and went on to a new potato chip manufacturer, Humpty Dumpty.

If you have more information about King Cole Foods, the South Portland Historical Society would love to hear from you. Norman Cole appears to be related to Frank W. Cole who ran the South Portland Co-op, a store on the corner of Sawyer and High Streets, but we’d like to learn more. The Society may be reached by phone at 767-7299, by email at sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com

10-17-08 George E. Taylor’s Pharmacy

Taylor’s Pharmacy was a popular spot in Thornton Heights for many decades. According to his son, Jim, George E. Taylor had worked at Charles Vallee’s pharmacy in Westbrook as a young man. Mr. Taylor worked his way through college at Columbia University; interestingly, he attended college with his friend, Cliff Ward, who himself went on to run Ward’s Drug Store in Pleasantdale, on the corner of Broadway and Elm Streets. Mr. Taylor opened his Taylor’s Pharmacy at 563 Main Street, on the corner of Froswick Street, around 1924.

Resident Elford Messer remembers George Taylor well. “Taylor’s drugstore supplied most of Thornton Heights with filled medical prescriptions, candy and ice cream treats,” says Mr. Messer. “For the ‘small fry,’ he had a glass cabinet beneath the counter filled with penny candy: from Charleston Chews, Jaw Breakers, Butterfingers, Bubble Gum…you name it. Those were the days!!” Former resident, Bob Dyke, also remembers George Taylor “as a very nice person who always spoke to the kids as well as the adults…I used to enjoy his soda fountain where he mixed ice cream shakes and soda.” Jim Taylor recalls his dad running the business through the troubled Depression years; it was a time when occasionally a prescription was filled for someone who couldn’t afford to pay – a time when neighbor helped neighbor. The Taylors lived in Thornton Heights – first at 33 Wilson Street, and later moved to 15 Pennsylvania Avenue.

In the early 1950s, John “Ted” Gill began working for Taylor’s Pharmacy and around 1955, George Taylor sold the business to Gill; he remained working at the pharmacy, however, and Gill kept the Taylor name on the store until the building was destroyed by fire in 1969. When the new pharmacy building was built, the name was changed to Gill’s Pharmacy.
10-10-08 Then and Now - Knightville

In this pair of then and now photos, we can see the numerous changes in Knightville in the past century. While the Masonic building seen on the right has remained relatively unchanged, the Knightville School in Legion Square is long gone, as are the trolley tracks that brought street cars across the bridge from Portland into this area, South Portland’s downtown. The large house on the left in the older picture once housed Thomas Devine’s pharmacy and soda fountain.

10-03-08 The Marion Street School

The Marion Street School was built during World War II when shipyard housing was put in at Broadview Park (along Alfred Street) and Mountain View Park (where the high school is now), and the Stanwood Park neighborhood was built. Shipyard workers moved into these neighborhoods with their families and thus South Portland needed to provide a school to accommodate the increase in children in this section of the city. According to a South Portland annual report, the “eight-room building was built and equipped by The Federal Works Agency with Lanham Act Funds…the Federal Works Agency delegated to the Federal Public Housing Authority the responsibility of construction. The architect was Miller & Beal, Portland, Maine, and the contractor, Friel Construction Company, Medford, Massachusetts. The building was occupied September 5, 1944.”

Marion Street School was later renamed in 1960 in honor of Helena H. Dyer, a former teacher at the school and principal there from 1948 until her retirement in 1959. The school (which was situated where Dyer’s playground is today) was demolished in 1972 and a new Dyer school building was erected.

Thanks to Society member Ron Jenkins who provided the accompanying photo of Mrs. Loon’s first grade class at Marion Street School in 1959. The school served the sub-primary grade through grade three; fourth and fifth graders would have attended the Reynolds School near the intersection of Evans Street and Broadway.

09-26-08 Legion Square Pharmacy
Older residents of Knightville will remember the long-running Legion Square Pharmacy. Opened circa 1934 by Albert Wheeler and Nelson Packhem, the business was first located at 97 Ocean Street in the Richards Block. After World War II began, Wheeler and Packhem moved their business to the stand-alone building at 85 Ocean Street. Legion Square Pharmacy was later run by pharmacist Leroy Dyment in the 1950s. In the early 1960s, Legion Square Pharmacy closed at that location and Mr. Dyment went on to operate the Mill Creek Pharmacy in the Mill Creek Shopping Center.

We thank South Portland Historical Society member Ron Jenkins for the accompanying photograph showing the interior of the Legion Square Pharmacy at 85 Ocean Street. Both Ron’s mother and brother, Carl, worked at the pharmacy. Pictured are Mr. Leroy Dyment, proprietor, and Mrs. Marion Jenkins. Mrs. Jenkins worked there in the mid to late 1950s and continued to work with Mr. Dyment when he moved to Mill Creek.

09-19-08 The Chase in Loveitt's Field

As shown in the accompanying photograph, the Chase house was one of the early grand cottage homes built in Loveitt’s Field in the late 1890s. The home was used as a summer boarding house, similar to the Cloyester nearby. While the Cloyester had numerous postcards printed showing its establishment, it is rare to find anything related to the Chase. The South Portland Historical Society recently acquired an interesting piece of ephemera — a piece of stationery from “The New Chase, Loveitt's Heights, Willard, Me.” The proprietor, Mrs. Perley Chase, had issued a receipt for two weeks lodging in 1904.

The Willard and Loveitt’s Field neighborhoods have changed dramatically in the past century. After the trolley line was extended to the area in the 1890s, Willard became much more of a tourist destination, with numerous hotels and lodging places springing up, among them the Willard Haven Inn, the Willard Inn, the Cloyester, the Chase, and the Grand View Cottage. The inns were easily accessible by Canadian tourists who traveled to the Portland area by train and then hopped on a trolley to the South Portland waterfront.

09-12-08 Evening Chat: Memories of Redbank

On Thursday, September 18, the South Portland Historical Society will host the second of its 2008 Evening Chat series. The evening’s topic: Memories of Redbank. Redbank was originally built in the 1940s as one of many government-funded housing complexes created during World War II to house workers and their families from the South Portland shipyards. Unlike many other wartime housing complexes which were removed after the war, however, Redbank has remained. Due to geographic factors that separate it somewhat from other South Portland neighborhoods, Redbank has retained its own distinct character, one that has made it a treasure to many residents who have called Redbank home over the many decades which have passed since the war. Indeed, many former residents still feel strong ties to the Redbank families and home of their youth.

After the Mary Marsh School (formerly known as Redbank School) was demolished in 2007, former resident Suzan Roberts Norton started a webpage and began posting her own stories and photos to remember and record her neighborhood's history. She was joined by many current and former residents, including Ruth Conner Bastarache, who started her own Redbank website. Suzan Norton, through her own writings and the contributions of many others, donated a large collection of stories and photographs to create the Redbank Village collection at South Portland Historical Society.

Evening Chats are oral history discussion events which are taped by SPC-TV for preservation and for airing at a later date. We welcome Redbankers to come reminisce and share their stories. The event will take place at City Hall in the Council Chambers. Participants are welcome to arrive at 6pm for light
refreshments and a chance to meet other participants; the Chat will begin promptly at 6:30pm with a short slide show about Redbank, followed by open discussion among current and former residents of the neighborhood.

Whether you have a first-hand account to share, or if you just want to come and listen, everyone is welcome to attend. Additional photographs of the Redbank neighborhood are being sought for inclusion in the slide show. If you have photographs which you would be willing to share, please contact Kathy at 347-4137, or sphistoricalsoociety@maine.rr.com, prior to the event.

The South Portland Historical Society’s 2008 Evening Chat series is made possible with the support of the Maine Humanities Council and through a collaboration with South Portland Community Television. For more information, link to the historical society at www.southportland.org.

09-05-08 James Otis Kaler School

With school back in session, it’s fun to take a quick look back at some of South Portland’s old schools. Having been a Kaler Cougar myself, I do get a little nostalgic when I think back to the old Kaler School building. Named for James Otis Kaler, a journalist, author, teacher and one-time Superintendent of South Portland Schools, the original building was built in 1929 and was a classic-looking, two-story, brick building with additional classes and bathrooms in the basement. I remember having gym classes in that basement in rain and cold weather. When the old school closed in 2002, they held a “yard sale” before it was demolished; I was able to save the brass coat hooks from my first grade classroom and we’ve incorporated those hooks in our home today. The old building was demolished in 2002 to make way for the new Kaler School building, which opened in 2003.

Antique Appraisal Day – Saturday, September 6

A reminder to our readers that the 2nd annual Antique Appraisal Day will take place on Saturday, September 6, from 10am to 2pm at the South Portland Community Center. Like an antique road show, this is a fun event, open to the general public - you can come with your treasures and leave after your appraisal, or feel free to stay and watch the show! Professional appraiser Bruce Buxton and his colleagues, Doug Harding and Beth Turner, will be on hand to identify and appraise your antiques and collectibles. Objects should be small enough to carry in your arms. Please, no stamps, coins or bottles. The cost is $10 for appraisal of one item, $18 for two items and $25 for three items - additional items may be appraised if time permits. Proceeds benefit the South Portland Historical Society. For more information, call the Society at 347-4137 or link to the Society at www.southportland.org.

08-29-08 Antique Appraisal Day comes to South Portland

It’s time to search your attics and pull out your treasures - the 2nd annual Antique Appraisal Day is coming. On Saturday, September 6, antique appraiser Bruce Buxton, with his colleagues, Doug Harding and Beth Turner, will be on hand at the SP Community Center to give careful, and often entertaining, attention to your antiques and collectibles. Mr. Buxton has auctioned and appraised antiques, fine arts, decorative arts, furniture, silver and other items all over the United States for nearly 40 years. He is considered to be one of the finest antiques experts in New England (art work, porcelain, metals, furniture). There will also be appraisers on hand to value books, documents, manuscripts, jewelry, glass, linen and textiles. The event will take place at the South Portland Community Center, 21 Nelson Road, from 10am to 2pm.

Like an antique roadshow, this is a fun event, open to the general public - you can come with your treasures and leave after your appraisal, or feel free to stay
and watch the show! Objects should be small enough to carry in your arms. Please, no stamps, coins or bottles. The cost is $10 for appraisal of one item, $18 for two items and $25 for three items - additional items may be appraised if time permits. Proceeds benefit the South Portland Historical Society. For more information, call the Society at 347-4137 or link to the Society at www.southportland.org.

A Call for Sardine Factory Workers

The historical society has not yet selected the topic for its Evening Chat oral history program in October. One topic under consideration is South Portland’s sardine factories in the 1900’s; however, we need to find some people who would be able to share their stories. Did you, or someone you know, work in a sardine factory and be willing to share your memories? Please call us at 347-4137 or email sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com if you could help with this preservation effort.

08-22-08 Monuments and Markers in South Portland: The Second Parish of Falmouth

By Craig Skelton, member South Portland Historical Society

Travel to the campus of SMCC and just beyond the top of the hill on Fort Road you will find a small chapel now located roughly where a combination garrison and meeting house of the First Parish of Falmouth once stood. Next to that chapel is a marker that was dedicated on November 10, 1984 as part of the 250th anniversary celebration for the First Congregational Church whose origins rest in the First Parish of Falmouth.

Many challenges faced those brave souls who lived here, as it was then described as wilderness infested with wolves. This area was known as Purpooduck at that time and several attempts to settle here had been met with great difficulties including attacks by Indians. Due to the difficulties of having residents cross the Fore River to worship at the First Parish, the preacher would instead hold worship services in the garrison/meeting house in Purpooduck on every third Sunday.

It was in 1733 that the church divided from the First Parish and became the Second Parish of Falmouth. A new place of worship was constructed atop Meetinghouse Hill in 1734. If you enjoy finding monuments and markers, a marker can be found to the left of the main gate of Mount Pleasant Cemetery indicating where the church was erected.

Barely 100 years passed and the building was replaced with a new structure in 1835. Fifty-six years later, in the spring of 1891, the congregation voted to drag the church building across the street to its current location at the fork of Cottage and Mitchell Road. The church has seen many changes and will be celebrating its 275 anniversary next year.

08-15-08 Mill Creek: The Giant Department Store
The accompanying circa-1970 photograph is sure to be intriguing to new or younger South Portland residents, and nostalgic for those of us above forty who have lived here awhile! This shopping plaza was built in the early 1970's, anchored first by the Giant Department Store. You'll notice in the photos that Carriage Lantern has continued in the same space since the early 1970's. My early memories of that plaza are when King’s department store was there from 1973 to the early 1980's. I remember getting my hair cut at a salon in that plaza; I think the hairdresser’s name was Randy - he had a moustache and cowboy boots. Even today, I still miss the Russell's clothing store.

After King's closed, Mars opened and operated from that site in the mid-to-late 1980's; then the store front was left vacant until Shaw's renovated and moved to this location in the early 1990's.

Evening Chat: Long Creek before, during, and after World War II

Reminder: On Thursday, August 21, South Portland Historical Society invites the public to come to an Evening Chat about the Long Creek area and the 1944 plane crash. Evening Chats are oral history discussion events which are taped for preservation and later broadcast. The event will take place at City Hall in the Council Chambers. Participants are welcome to arrive at 6pm for light refreshments and a chance to meet other participants; the chat will begin promptly at 6:30pm with a short slide show, followed by open discussion among participants who used to live in or near the Long Creek neighborhoods. Please note that we will not be covering the Redbank neighborhood at this event; Redbank will be the sole topic of a second Evening Chat in September.

Whether you have a first-hand account to share, or if you just want to come and listen, everyone is welcome to attend. Photographs of these housing developments, and of the Long Creek area in general, are very scarce. If you have photographs which you would be willing to include in the slide show, please contact Kathy at 767-3268 prior to the event.

The South Portland Historical Society's 2008 Evening Chat series is made possible with the support of the Maine Humanities Council and through a collaboration with South Portland Community Television. For more information, link to the historical society at www.southportland.org.

08-08-08 Monuments and Markers in South Portland: The Freedom Tree
By Craig Skelton, member South Portland Historical Society

A handsome red maple now greets patrons at the parking lot entrance of the South Portland Public Library where in 1973 a group of South Portland Jaycee Wives planted what appeared to be no more than a toothpick.

Following the Memorial Day parade in May of 1973, the tree and the plaque pictured here honoring Capt. John E. Duffy and all POW's and MIA's were dedicated. The master of ceremonies for the occasion was the then well-known local weatherman, Bob O'Will. Father Reny from Holy Cross led with a dedication prayer and Mrs. James Dyer, the president of the Jaycee Wives, presented the memorial plaque to Helen Duffy, the mother of Capt. Duffy. Also in attendance was Robert, a brother of Capt. Duffy, as well as City Manager Ron Stewart.
and Council Chair Eugene Gendron.

At that time, Capt. Duffy had been missing since his aircraft went down on April 4, 1970. He had been flying an observation mission in a Cessna O-2A Skymaster.

After the war ended, it was hoped that he might return with other released prisoners of war. As that possibility faded, discovery and return of his remains did not appear promising due to strained relations with South Vietnam and the remote location of the plane crash. Renewed cooperation and the efforts of a congressional subcommittee that traveled to Vietnam in 1992 assisted with the location and return of his and other soldiers’ remains.

I would like to thank Marie Chenevert at the South Portland Public Library for her assistance in researching this article.

08-01-08 Evening Chat: Long Creek before, during, and after World War II

South Portland saw vast changes in all aspects of life during World War II, one of them being major housing developments that sprang up all over the city to house workers at the South Portland shipyards. Long Creek Terrace was just one of many government housing complexes created during the war. Located in the area where Home Depot and Home Goods now operate, little evidence remains today of that South Portland neighborhood (after the buildings had long been removed, a circus would set up in that location in the 1960s).

Within close proximity to Long Creek Terrace, the government also established the Westbrook Street trailer park, which was the site of a 1944 plane crash which remains the biggest aviation disaster in Maine’s history.

On Thursday, August 21, the South Portland Historical Society will feature this topic in the first of its Evening Chats for the 2008 season. Evening Chats are oral history discussion events which may be taped by SPC-TV for preservation and for airing at a later date. The event will take place at City Hall in the Council Chambers. Participants are welcome to arrive at 6pm for light refreshments and a chance to meet other participants; the Chat will begin promptly at 6:30pm with a short slide show about Long Creek, followed by open discussion among participants who used to live in or near the Long Creek neighborhoods. Please note that we will not be covering the Redbank neighborhood at this event; Redbank will be the sole topic of a second Evening Chat in September.

Whether you have a first-hand account to share, or if you just want to come and listen, everyone is welcome to attend. Photographs of these housing developments, and of the Long Creek area in general, are very scarce. If you have photographs which you would be willing to include in the slide show, please contact Kathy at 767-3268 prior to the event.

The South Portland Historical Society’s 2008 Evening Chat series is made possible with the support of the Maine Humanities Council and through a collaboration with South Portland Community Television. For more information, link to the historical society at www.southportland.org.

07-25-08 Bridging the Years
From taking advantage of a fallen tree, to using wood, stone and steel to build towering monuments, bridges are one of our most enduring legacies and one of our earliest triumphs over the environment.

The story of bridging the Fore River actually started during the last ice age, more than 11,500 years ago, when much of the world’s water was held in sheets of ice at the poles. This ice and snow carved valleys into the landscape as it slowly moved down to the sea. Over time the Earth warmed, causing the ice to recede, and oceans to rise, creating Portland, South Portland, and the Fore River.

Our first bridge to cross the Fore River was built in 1822. This wooden structure eventually had tracks added for streetcars. The electric car barn can still be seen at the corner of Ocean and A Street.

In 1916, the structure known as the Million Dollar Bridge was opened to traffic. This reinforced concrete bascule, or movable bridge, had two leaves, totaling 100 feet in width, and 24 feet of clearance over the water. These leaves could be raised to allow boats to pass, and lowered again for road traffic. Over the years this bridge suffered both the corrosive effect of weather, and damage from collisions. The last vessel to run afoul with the bridge was the tanker Julie N. The old bridge survived this impact, but its final day was near.

Even as the Julie N cleanup was taking place in 1996, work was already underway on the Casco Bay Bridge. This concrete and steel bascule bridge was similar in concept to its predecessor, but dwarfed it in size. With a total length of 4,748 feet and rising 65 feet above the water, the Casco Bay Bridge supports multiple lanes of traffic, and has to be opened less often for ships to pass. Since being opened to traffic in 1997, the bridge has become a prominent landmark of the local skyline.

One of the great things about South Portland is how its residents have a long tradition of neighborhood identity. Yes, we are all South Portlanders, yet many of us also have an identity as living in “Ferry Village”, “Thornton Heights”, “Pleasantdale” or another of our many original villages or neighborhoods. In the 1800s, the village identity was so strong, we actually can still find postcards and other items which are proudly labeled with “Knightville, ME”, “Willard, ME” or other such names. It is a frequent question that we hear from our newer residents – they want to know what their neighborhood is called and where the neighborhood boundaries lie.

Over the years, we have seen new neighborhoods arise where before there was none, and new generations of South Portlanders trying to come up with new identities: Sylvan Site, Cooperville, and Sunset Park, to name a few. Some just refer to their location like the “outer Highland” neighborhood – perhaps we should start a contest to come up with an official name that will stick!

Most SP history buffs know that the area which we now refer to as Meeting House Hill was formerly known as Grasshopper Hill. But very few people realize that there was a short time when Meeting House Hill was actually known as Brooklyn Heights. Indeed, in the 1920s on the corner of Cottage Road and Sawyer Street (where Beal’s Ice Cream now sits) was the Brooklyn Heights Garage, run by Hubbard...
Newell.

The accompanying then-and-now photos show the changes that have taken place from the 1920s to today on the top of the hill. In the circa-1920 photo, the small building on the left has a sign reading “Brooklyn Heights Fish Market.” We had previously shown a photo of that market and house at 391-395 Cottage Road in our 6/8/2007 column. The fish market was run in the early 1920s by Charles Dyer, who lived with his wife, Maud, in the adjoining house; then changed hands in the mid-1920s, when Harold Wade took over and lived next door with his wife, Margaret. As you can see in the current-day photo, the buildings are now gone and the Cape Veterinary Clinic’s parking lot is roughly on that spot.

Note to readers: I would like to thank my good friend, Craig Skelton, who has written several contributing columns this summer so that I could enjoy a vacation with my family. Mr. Skelton has written many articles since we started this column back in 2005 and I know his stories are enjoyed immensely. We hope that others might consider helping us out! We would especially enjoy hearing from anyone who has a first-hand account to write about – maybe you have a relative who was significant in some way to South Portland? Please give me a call at 767-3268, or email Kathy@BarrenHillBooks.com, if you have a story idea.

07-11-08 Knightville in the Past: Jack’s Barber Shop

By Craig Skelton, member
South Portland Historical Society

Although I never met my grandfather, let me know if you might have crossed his path.

Jack’s Barber Shop operated for 15 years at 77 Ocean Street until its owner suffered a heart attack in June of 1945 and died at age 51. The shop must have seen many customers over that time period who never knew Jack’s real name was Lundie.

In this picture taken in August of 1942, I can only imagine that the men were discussing events surrounding the war and perhaps his son Ken who was at that time serving his country. Lundie served during WWI and after seeing action in France was attached to General Pershing’s command. He proudly displayed a sign on the wall behind his chair that said “Lundie Skelton, Personal Barber to General Pershing.”

He served out his remaining years in the Army at Fort Williams in Cape Elizabeth and after leaving the Army, Lundie decided to stick around instead of returning to the town he called “Hole in the Wall” Tennessee.

My father loved telling a story of his attempts to walk by the barber shop as a small boy. His dad would knock on the window and gesture for him to come in and get a trim. The story was most often told to my brothers and me in the 1970’s at a time when hair was worn a tad longer than my father could stand.

The site at 77 Ocean Street was no stranger to barber shops. My research indicated as far back as 1909 a barber shop was operated by Edward C. Boucher. At least three other barbers ran the shop until the early 1930’s when Lundie bought the shop. After Lundie’s death, a few more barbers operated and records indicate the barber pole came down about 1990 when a sewing business called “In Stitches” occupied that location. With 80 years of barbers, 77 Ocean Street certainly is noteworthy.

In more recent times I can recall a business known as Rod’s TV operated there. During one of my visits there I remember being engulfed in a cloud of smoke inside those walls. Rod could be found hunched
behind some TV or other doing some sort of repair. An assortment of other businesses have plied their wares there in this new era that lacks the 30 some odd thousand cars per day that once passed by the window.

07-04-08 Monuments and Markers in South Portland: The H.M.S. Bohemian

By Craig Skelton, member
South Portland Historical Society

The H.M.S. Bohemian with a crew of 99 was carrying 218 passengers including immigrants from Ireland along with valuable dry cargo. The ship left Liverpool on February 4th, 1864 for America and was 5 days overdue from Liverpool, England when on February 22nd, George Washington’s birthday, it struck a submerged ledge. Mysteriously, the steamer was running in calm seas and the ledge it had struck was well known to mariners. After the accident it was said that haze that evening made the lights on shore look further off than they were which could explain the captain’s misunderstanding of his true location.

The steamer had enough lifeboats yet passengers panicked and too many piled into one lifeboat as it was being lowered. Those passengers were dumped into the icy water and other lifeboats already on their way to shore did not return to assist.

Twelve of the 42 believed to have drowned were Irish immigrants from County Galway. Their remains were unclaimed and subsequently buried at public expense in South Portland’s Calvary Cemetery. The mass grave was unmarked for 120 years until 1984 when two local Irish organizations, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Irish American Club of Portland placed the Celtic cross pictured here.

Examples of the Celtic cross can be found as far back as 800 A.D. where they were erected to mark monasteries and preaching stations. Some Christians have interpreted the circle found on the cross as a symbol of eternity or everlasting love of God or a symbol of the crown of thorns or a halo.

My friend Kathy DiPhilippo noted that this memorial was not on my list of monuments and markers and pointed me to it. In spite of that help the Bohemian memorial was still a challenge to find. Accompanied by my wife, daughter and some resident woodchucks, it was the youngest of our search party who located the stone. Our adventure took place on a pleasant evening and the search added a bit of fun to our walk through the quiet surroundings found on the back side of Calvary Cemetery near Cash Corner.

06-27-08 Monuments and Markers in South Portland:

Civil War Veterans Monument
By Craig Skelton, member
South Portland Historical Society

Travel down Lincoln Street and turn off on Clark Road heading into Forest City Cemetery and a bit off the beaten path you will find an old cannon mounted on a pedestal pointed skyward. This monument to Civil War Veterans was placed there by an organization called the Thatcher Post No. 111.

The Thatcher Post was one of 167 organizations located in Maine that was part of the Grand Army of the Republic. Much like the VFW or the American Legion, the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) was a veteran’s organization formed after the close of the Civil War. At its peak, the GAR reported 400,000 members nationwide with over 7,000 posts. The number of members attached to a post could range from a few to over a thousand.

The organization was based on three objectives: Fraternity, charity and loyalty. Gathering around a camp fire to sing songs and tell wartime stories was a favorite fraternal activity. Annual meetings called
encampments were also held throughout the country once each year and thousands of members would travel from afar to the State hosting an event and pitch tents. Images of this spectacle can be found at the Library of Congress website.

Charity activities included raising money for needy veterans, widows and orphans. By 1890 the GAR had been involved in the creation of soldiers’ and orphans’ homes in 16 states and orphanages in seven states.

The GAR worked very hard at fostering loyalty and reuniting a nation divided by the Civil War. Through their efforts, they encouraged the preservation of Civil War sites and historic documents. Money raised through their organization was used to create monuments and memorials in countless cities and towns throughout America and you no doubt have driven by some of those cannons or field pieces.

The cannon mounted on the pedestal in Forest City Cemetery was a heavy iron artillery piece commonly known as a Columbiad. Too large to be moved around, they were mounted in fortifications along rivers and the coast. Another example of this type of cannon can be found on Fort Gorges in Portland Harbor. These guns saw little action during the war and soon became obsolete.

Note to readers: SoPo Walk 2008 will take place in Mill Creek Park, next Friday on the 4th of July at 1pm. We hope you’ll take part in this fun walk-a-thon/parade. Free SoPo t-shirts to walkers raising $25 or more. Free Texas Roadhouse Kids Coins for children participating in the walk.

06-20-08 SoPo Walk – 4th of July, 2008

We hope you and your family will join us on Friday, July 4th, when the South Portland Historical Society will hold SoPo Walk 2008 in the downtown Knightville/Mill Creek area of South Portland. This fundraiser for the historical society will also serve as a mini-parade. Feel free to wear your red-white-and-blue, carry a flag, decorate your bikes - however you like to show your patriotic pride! The walk will not be lengthy, just around Knightville/Mill Creek and the Greenbelt – we're aiming for fun, not distance! Participants are asked to collect donations in advance and turn in with their contribution form at registration. Those turning in $25 or more will receive a free SoPo t-shirt. There will be a prize for the participant who turns in the highest level of donations.

Also joining in the fun will be Andy Armadillo, the Texas Roadhouse mascot. Andy will be handing out free Kids Coins, good for a free kids’ meal at Texas Roadhouse, to all SoPo Walk participants aged 12 and under.

Registration will take place in Mill Creek Park , near Hannaford’s, at 1pm. Refreshments will be available. The walk will start at 1:15pm. FMI, call 767-3268 or 799-3937. We thank you for your continued support as we work together as a community to establish a permanent home for South Portland's historical society.

Saco & Biddeford Savings Institution recently presented a check for $5,000 to the South Portland Historical Society, representing its second installment on a $25,000 pledge. Pictured above, from left to right, are Linda Noone, vice president and manager of Saco & Biddeford’s Mill Creek office, Kathy DiPhilipppo, director of the historical society, and Betty McGovern, assistant manager of Saco & Biddeford’s Mill Creek office.

06-13-08 An 1886 Account of Cape Elizabeth
Here is an interesting account of Cape Elizabeth (now South Portland). Written by George Varney, it was first published in 1886 in the Gazetteer of the State of Maine:

Cape Elizabeth is the most interesting of the environs of Portland for its historic associations, its coast scenery, and its industries. It is connected with that city by a ferry at Ferry Village, at the northeastern part of the town. Near this is the breakwater, having a lighthouse at its outer extremity. A short distance east is Cushing’s Point Village, beyond which, at Old Spring Point, is the lawn-covered masonry of Fort Preble. The manufactures at these places are marine craft of all sizes, from boats to ships, boots and shoes, medicines, oils, extracts and fountain-syrups, etc. Knightville, on the next point westward, is connected with Portland by a horse, carriage and foot bridge. On the right, looking toward the city, are about 25 acres, occupied with the works of the Portland Dry Dock Company. One of the docks is 100 by 42 feet, with a depth 20 feet, said to be the largest in the country. The manufactures of Knightville are meal and flour, boots and shoes, harnesses, tree and plant protectors, etc. The next point west is Turner's Island, whence the Portland, Saco and Portsmouth (Eastern) Railroad crosses to Portland. The Boston and Maine Railroad reaches Cape Elizabeth from Portland by a shorter bridge at the little Village of Ligonia, on a point north-west of the last. Here are the works of the Portland Kerosene Oil Co., occupying 2 acres of ground. The product of this factory is upwards of 4,000,000 gallons of oil annually. The other manufactory at this point is the extensive Rolling-mill of the Ligonia Iron Co. The mill employs about 200 men, and turns out some 14,000 tons of rails annually.

The numerous shade trees along the public ways are a noticeable feature of the town. Most of the roads bear names well-known to the people of the neighboring city, whose gay equipages whirl along their smooth lines toward summer residences, or some of the numerous points of interest.

The churches at present are four Methodist, two Congregationalist, one Free Baptist and the Welsh Church, the latter society being chiefly the workmen in the Rolling-mill and their families. Cape Elizabeth has an excellent town-hall, a brick building two stories in height. The town high school occupies a portion of the second story, and above this is the Masonic Hall. The town has fifteen public schoolhouses, valued at $4,000. The valuation of estates in 1870 was $1,784,831. In 1880 it was $1,869,199. The rate of taxation in 1880 was $1.72 on $100. The population of Cape Elizabeth in 1870 was 5,106. The census of 1880 fixes it at 5,315.

06-06-08 Barberry Creek and Cape Elizabeth Depot

For readers unaware of Barberry Creek, it is in a world all its own in South Portland, hidden away from the masses and home to a wide variety of birds, muskrats and other wildlife. The creek runs in the area between the closed Irving station on Broadway (across from Amato’s ) and the Forest City Cemetery. The South Portland Land Trust will offer a guided walk on the planned Barberry Creek Woods Trail on Saturday, June 7th at 9:30am. Anyone wishing to take part in the one-hour guided walk can meet the Land Trust in the parking lot behind J.P. Thornton’s. Be prepared for a slightly strenuous outing as the trail has hills, roots and what you’d expect in the Maine woods.

Barberry Creek Woods has been a playground for some young hardy souls for generations. Ray Taylor wrote of playing in those woods back in the 1920’s. On a recent walk, our own city councilor Tom Blake pointed out some remains of forts that he and his friends had created there in their youth in those woods.

Of course, the history of those woods goes back to the early settlers of this area. William Jordan noted in his book History of Cape Elizabeth that George Ingersoll had built a grist-mill on Barberry Creek in 1682, and in 1728, a saw mill was constructed and run there by Joshua Moody and John Brown.

The area’s more recent history dates back to the early 1840s when the Portland, Saco and Portsmouth
Railroad began running, and a train station was built on the site where the closed Irving station is now located. The photo at right shows the station, called the Cape Elizabeth Depot. Directly across from the depot (where Amato’s now sits) Mr. and Mrs. Freeman Evans ran a store from their home and in 1853, Cape Elizabeth’s first post office opened in that store. Prior to that, all residents on this side of the Fore River had to go to Portland to pick up mail.

In 1869, the villages of Turner’s Island and Cape Elizabeth Depot merged and took on the name of Pleasantdale. Unlike the more confined current-day boundaries of Pleasantdale, in the late 1800s, Pleasantdale encompassed the area from Anthoine Street all the way to Cash Corner, including the area going up Evans Street to Highland Avenue (of course, much of that area had few houses in those early days).

05-30-08 The Texas Company at Turner’s Island

What a delightful call and letter we received recently from Jim Caselden who, although he has moved across the country, is a South Portland native and shares our love for South Portland’s history. Jim was born in “Ma Kelley’s house on Kelly Street in Pleasantdale” and grew up in Knightville where he lived at 32 A Street with his family, the eldest of four children.

I’ll go now to Jim’s words which are both eloquent and insightful, as he describes this interesting photo that he has shared with us: “The photo was taken on Sunday, October 4, 1931, looking eastward along the dock owned by the Texas Company – Portland Terminal. The entire terminal complex was located adjacent to what was commonly known as Turner’s Island.” [the plant’s physical address was 102 Mechanic St…KD]

“The steamer at the end of the dock is the ‘Texas’. It was the Texas Company’s first coastal steamer to unload at the Portland Terminal. The code flags celebrated the occasion. (The ‘New Jersey’ was the last steamer to unload at this terminal on Friday, February 3, 1950, ending 18 years and 4 months of service.) At the moment this image was taken, the ‘Texas’ was resting high in slack water, the smoke was straight up, the flags were lifeless and reflections off the water were clear, all signs of a serene fall day. If one were to look carefully they would see a crew of men working at the dock manifold (where hoses are hooked up between ship and shore to load or off-load oil).”

“My Dad worked on this dock and warehouse for almost forty years. He started as a temporary worker picking up coal that had fallen off the coal tender (these were difficult days and nothing was wasted). He was hired as a full-time employee on May 12, 1932. I believe he started at $16.50 per week, which was very good considering it was during the middle of the Great Depression.”

Of the Cape Power Plant seen at the far right, he says: “Our house was about 250 yards from those two red brick smokestacks and the large red brick building that connected them. The building housed what was known as the “Whistle” which was a very important part of our lives. The whistle signaled ‘no school today’ by delivering three long blasts – a short pause – and another three long blasts. We kids loved it…Moms groaned. The whistle also summoned volunteer firefighters to assemble at a specific alarm box location.”

Reminder to readers: Don’t forget to visit www.SummerinMaineAuction.com to see the exciting summertime items which have been donated to the SP Historical Society fundraiser. We have added a lot of new items over the past week. More cruises, golf, whitewater rafting, restaurants, museums – everything fun for a local vacation! The auction will go live from June 4 to June 14th. FMI, call 767-3268.

05-23-08 Summer in Maine 2008 – Online Auction
The South Portland Historical Society continues to raise funds for the acquisition of the Cushing's Point House. We hope you'll take a moment to check out our latest endeavor - we have launched a new website which will host the **Summer in Maine 2008 Auction**. This auction is located on the Internet, themed for summer, and timed so that you can find some great items to use during our glorious Maine summer. It's also a way for Maine businesses and organizations to support our efforts while getting the word out about the great adventures that Maine has to offer. This auction is all about "local" - featuring items symbolic of summertime in Maine. Golf, cruises, hotel stays, dining out, family adventures – the fun stuff that makes Maine a true vacationland!

You can check out the site at [www.SummerinMaineAuction.com](http://www.SummerinMaineAuction.com). There are already many items which have been posted on the site - new items are being added daily. The auction will go live on June 4th and will run until the bidding closes on June 14th. All proceeds will benefit the South Portland Historical Society.

If you have never participated in an online auction before, stay tuned! We will offer some help sessions once the auction begins so that you can learn how to submit your bids. Check the Sentry and our website for more information in the coming weeks.

Anyone have any auction item ideas? We'd love to hear from you. Perhaps you work for a business that would consider donating a gift certificate? We will be accepting items and adding to the auction right up until June 4th. Contact Kathy at 767-3268 or by email at SPHistoricalSociety@maine.rr.com.

So please do check out the new website to see the fun offerings - and check back later to see what new things have been added. Maybe you’d like to visit the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, or go on a Puffin Cruise on the Monhegan Boat Line. You could bid on two season subscriptions at the Theater of Monmouth, or for tickets to The Producers at Maine State Music Theatre. Maybe a sail in Portland Harbor on the Bagheera or Wendameen is more your style. If you have kids, try a Portland Sea Dogs game, the Seashore Trolley Museum, York’s Wild Animal Kingdom, Palace Playland or the Aquaboggan. An Eagle Island Tour out of Portland would make for a splendid day. Whatever your choice for summertime fun, you’re sure to find something of interest. It'll be a great way to have fun this summer and support the South Portland Historical Society at the same time!

The place to start is [www.SummerinMaineAuction.com](http://www.SummerinMaineAuction.com).

**05-16-08 The Cedars – Follow-up**
Thank you to the many residents who called about the Cedars column that ran on 4/18/2008. The building still exists on Homestead Avenue (see recent photo at right), located behind the Buttered Biscuit on Cottage Road. What a wonderful thing to see that the exterior of the Cedars has changed very little after all of this time.

Since the last column ran, one of our volunteers found this additional photograph in our archives. This is a very early photo, showing the Cedars with the semi-circular driveway that came in from Cottage Road. Documentation with the photograph indicates that the home was originally built as a summer home for William Davis.

I love photos like this as it gives a feel for how a neighborhood looked in earlier times. In the late 1800s, there were some large homes on large lots on Meeting House Hill, including some that can still be viewed today: the Cedars; the Captain Boyd home at 265 Cottage which was built around the Civil War era; and Andrew Sawyer’s home with his market gardens (at the corner of Mitchell and Sawyer Street). Certainly in the case of the Cedars and Andrew Sawyer’s home, the house lots were later subdivided and developed.

In the accompanying scan from a 1914 Richards atlas, we can see how the Cedars sat in relation to the surrounding area. According to Tammy Nason-Tierney, her great-great grandparents (Thomes) bought the home back around the late 1920s and it had become a boardinghouse at that time.

We will continue our investigation; if there is anyone willing to volunteer their time/skills for deed research, please let us know. The Society can be reached at Kathy@BarrenHillBooks.com, 767-7299.

05-09-08 Greetings from South Portland: A City in Postcards

Collecting postcards can be a fun hobby but, when it comes to real picture postcards, the cards themselves can sometimes prove to hold rare and significant images of a city or town’s history. I have often found myself at a postcard show or antique store and been just delighted to find a postcard with an image of something that I had heard about but never seen. Sometimes a card will have information on the reverse which can provide valuable information about a location, business or event.

Next Wednesday evening, on May 14th, South Portland will be treated to a lecture and slide show, “Greetings from South Portland: A City in Postcards” by Earle Shettleworth, Jr., Maine’s state historian and director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. Mr. Shettleworth will be the featured speaker at the South Portland Historical Society’s annual meeting at the Community Center, where he will display many images from the MHPC’s extensive postcard collection.

Free and open to the public, the event will start at 6:30pm with a brief business meeting, followed by a live auction and Mr. Shettleworth’s slide show. There will be some fun gift baskets auctioned off to benefit the Society, including the “A Day in Maine” basket containing passes to a lighthouse, a book of Maine lighthouses, a Maine vocabulary guide and an LL bean pouch. Other items include the “Gifts from the Kitchen” basket, the “Weekend Repairman” basket and others.
I recently came across a list of South Portland businesses and organizations in 1902 and was pleased to find the answer to my question about the locations of the United Order of the Golden Cross commanderies (Sentry column, 1/25/2008). Here they are, along with some other interesting notes about South Portland in 1902:

-There were two locations of the United Order of the Golden Cross in SP. The Ocean View Commandery, No 233 met every Monday evening at the Knights of Pythias hall, 41 High Street. The Oasis Commandery, No. 241 met every Tuesday evening in the Oasis Hall, 24 E Street.

-Also meeting at the Oasis Hall in 1902 were the following: the Cumberland Lodge, No 66 of the Knights of Pythias (every Wednesday); the Pine Tree Lodge, No. 18 of the Ancient Order of United Workmen (every Thursday); the Masconomo Tribe No. 18 of the Improved Order of Red Men (every Monday evening); the Minneola Council No. 8 of the Degree of Pocahontas (Thursday evenings). The Society has no photographs of the interior of the Oasis (Legion) Hall building on E Street - surely someone must have a photo of a dance there or something, please contact us (767-3268).

-The post office was located in the Masonic building at 107 Ocean Street.

-In 1902, the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church was located at 23 Cottage Road (where City Hall is today), with Rev. Joseph A. Corey serving as its pastor.

-Parker O. Haley was serving as the lighthouse keeper at Portland Breakwater (Bug) Light. This was at a time when there was a keeper’s house attached to the lighthouse and it was a 2,000 foot walk along the breakwater to get out there.

-Harris S. Grant was the keeper at Spring Point Ledge Light – at a time when he would have needed to take a boat out to the lighthouse – the breakwater had not yet been constructed.

-James Otis Kaler was the Superintendent of Schools in 1902 and the Honorable C. Newell Trefethen was our mayor.

-There were about approximately 6,300 South Portland residents at that time.

Note to readers: Thank you to the many residents who called about the Cedars column that ran on 4/18/2008. The building still exists, on Homestead Avenue (see photo at right taken last week). According to Tammy Nason-Tierney, her great-great grandparents (Thomes) bought the home back around the late 1920s and it was a boarding house at that time, but we have yet to discover if the building had another use prior to their ownership. The postcard image that we ran was from 1905 and the building does have the look of an inn or summer boarding house. There were several summer boarding houses at that time (popular with Canadian tourists) but we have yet to discover if that was the case with the Cedars. With the trolley stop in front on the way to the Cape Casino, it is very likely. We will continue our investigation; if there is anyone willing to volunteer their time/skills for deed research, please let us know.

04-25-08 Redbank Memories
We owe a debt of gratitude to Suzan Roberts Norton who grew up in Redbank and still holds the neighborhood dear today. Inspired after the demolition of her childhood school in Redbank, Suzan established a site on the Internet where current and former Redbank residents could share their memories. Reaching out to her friends, family and former neighbors through the website and phone calls, Suzan gathered together many stories and photographs of early Redbank and created a lasting tribute via a new Redbank Collection which she donated to the South Portland Historical Society for preservation.

The Society relies heavily on donations from members of the South Portland community in order to collect and preserve the history of our many neighborhoods.

Historically, there have been limited donations from residents in the western section of South Portland, leaving the Society’s historic record limited in regards to neighborhoods like Cash Corner, Thornton Heights, Sunset Park, Redbank and other western areas. We hope that Suzan’s donation will inspire others to look in photo albums, dig out those school pictures and even just write down some cherished memories of life in South Portland in our collective youths. Call 767-7299.

Elford Messer shared these two photos of the ice house burning at Clarks Pond in January 1962. This photo was taken from farther up Westbrook Street in Thornton Heights.

The ice house at Clarks Pond was burned by the South Portland Fire Department in a controlled fire. This close-up photo was taken from Westbrook Street.

04-18-08 The Cedars

We’d like to enlist the public’s help once again in solving a mystery. The accompanying photographs appeared on postcards in the early 1900’s. In the first image, we see people relaxing in rocking chairs on the expansive porch of “The Cedars” in South Portland. In the second, we see a trolley stop identified as “The Cedars Waiting Room” – another sign on the building says “Real Estate Office and Bureau of Information” and the trolley car shows that it is on the Meeting House Hill/Cape Cottage line. The buildings are not the same, but we would guess that the location would have been similar or adjacent.

Neither card identifies the location further. City Directories from around the years of the postmark do not show any listing for Cedar or Cedars. We also have found no reference to the Cedars in any other reference book thus far. If you have any information to share, we would very much appreciate hearing from you. Please email Kathy@barrenhillbooks.com or call 767-3268.

04-11-08 Images of Fort Preble
Our thanks to South Portland resident, Adelaide Curran, for sharing with us and our Sentry readers the accompanying image of her uncle, Theodore Sterner, at Fort Preble. Now home to Southern Maine Community College, Fort Preble was built in 1808 on the site of the former Fort Hancock, and was manned right up until 1950. The South Portland Historical Society has a large collection of Fort Preble-related materials, including a muster roll of prisoners held at Fort Preble during the Civil War (believed to be the Confederate prisoners captured in the Caleb Cushing affair). The other two images at right are from the Society’s extensive Fort Preble postcard collection. Enjoy!

04-04-08 South Portland: A Call to Action

A deadline is approaching… By now, I’m sure our Sentry readers are well aware of South Portland Historical Society’s capital campaign for a permanent home. The Society has pursued the Cushing’s Point House, a beautiful building adjacent to Bug Light Park. It is a historic building which is one of the last reminders of a lost neighborhood, and of the shipyards which put the home into service during WWII. South Portland has already answered the call to action in a big way – thanks to the generosity of our community and several grantors, the Society has raised its cash and pledges total to $178,000. Thank you to our donors! Establishing a permanent home is a legacy that we are all part of, creating a history museum dedicated to South Portland, and which will serve current and future South Portland residents.

We hope that you will join with your friends and neighbors in this significant effort. There are many examples of smaller communities in Maine that have come together in a similar way to raise funds for a home for their local historical society. South Portland can do it! We are a city of over 23,000 people, so even a small gift can achieve amazing things when added to the contributions from an entire community.

If you have been waiting to give, please consider making that gift today. The Society has an interim goal that it needs to reach by early May. Reaching the goal will allow additional time for continued fundraising toward this historic home. Donations can be made by using the accompanying cut out form and mailing to the address listed, by credit card (link to our site through and go to the Donation button), or drop off your check for the Society at the Information Desk at City Hall. FMI, call 767-3268.

03-28-08 An Early South Portland Football Team
Given the popularity of football in America today, it’s interesting to take a look at how different football was in our country in the 19th century. It wasn’t until 1876 when the start of American football really began, when the first rules were actually recorded. Prior to that, schools and colleges each had their own varieties of the game, which looked more like rugby than modern day football.

Early football was a violent sport. With no helmets and limited padding, and rules which more closely resembled “anything goes”, injuries were a regular occurrence. A popular play of the early game was the “flying wedge”, with offensive players holding on to one another in a v-formation and charging forward with the ball. The resulting force of collisions between the offensive and defensive lines could cause crippling injuries or even death. As a result of 19 fatalities in 1905, pressure was on to make changes to American football rules to make it safer.

The accompanying photograph is part of the Etta Gregory Watts collection at the South Portland Historical Society. In it, we can catch a glimpse of not just a South Portland team, but also what an early American football team looked like: below-the-knee padding, no helmets, and only the fellow holding the football (perhaps the quarterback) wearing padding on his upper arms. We believe this photo dates to the 1890s and we are currently doing some research on the restaurant pictured, which should help to pinpoint the date of the photo. A street sign hanging on the corner of the building identifies the location as East High Street. We believe the building sat opposite the old Knights of Pythias Hall in Ferry Village.

If you have any information to share about this photograph, we would appreciate hearing from you. Please email Kathy@barrenhillbooks.com or call 767-3268.

03-21-08 Sam Silverman’s Willard Beach Attractions

We ran a column in the Sentry in early February that talked about Sam Silverman’s popcorn stand that was in business in the 1930s and ‘40s at the foot of Willard Street – that small building still stands today. Looking towards the water, the popcorn stand was on your right; during that same time period, Sam Silverman also ran the Willard Beach Bath House that would have been on your left. In order to attract business, and also perhaps for the fun of it, as he has been described quite the character, Sam used to hold competitions on the beach; whether it was swimming races or climbing the greased pole for a prize, there was plenty for beachgoers to do.

Another attraction that Sam Silverman had for people to come and see was some caged animals. In the accompanying pictures, we can see an image of the Willard Beach Bath House as it stood at the end of Willard Street, along with images of a bear and a monkey on display, with kids perched along the rail for a glimpse. The Society would like to thank Frances Findlay for sharing these photographs with us that show a rare glimpse of the activity at Willard Beach in the ‘30s and ‘40s.

Reminder – Historical and Genealogical Research Event

Just
a reminder that on Saturday, March 22nd, the Society is holding an event at the SP Community Center from 1pm to 4pm. Experts will be on hand to answer your questions related to genealogy research, photograph dating and preservation, deed research and house history research. Half-hour, one-on-one sessions will be available. Free for Society members, $10 per session for non-members. FMI, call 799-3937.

03-14-08 Ask An Expert – Historical and Genealogical Research

On Saturday, March 22, the South Portland Historical Society will host an afternoon of historical and genealogical research at the South Portland Community Center, 21 Nelson Road. This event will allow you to ask an expert your research and/or preservation questions on a one-on-one basis.

Linda Eastman, Kathy Amoroso, and Fred Stuart, genealogy enthusiasts and experts, will help you with genealogy questions from the very basic to the more complex questions of intermediate and advanced genealogy searches. Kathy DiPhilippo, skilled in tracing the ancestry of homes, will be available to help you research the history of your home and its earlier inhabitants. David Rooker, Esq. will be on hand to give you direction in conducting a title search of your house. David Mishkin of Just Black & White will be available to guide you in the proper way to preserve your photographs and documents, and Jacqueline Field, author of American Silk 1830-1930, will help you identify time periods of your unidentified photographs.

Half-hour individual sessions will be available to ask questions, learn, and receive advice in any one or more of the specific areas listed. Pre-registration is strongly recommended. Call Linda at 799-3937 to reserve your time or email her at meastma2@maine.rr.com. Attendees are welcome to stay and listen in as the experts help other researchers, as well. The event is free to South Portland Historical Society members; $10 fee for each session for non-members.

Laughs for a Cause! Please join us for An Afternoon of Comedy on Saturday, March 15, at 1pm. The comedy show features local business owner and comic Dennis Fogg, as well as Tammy Pooler and Bo, in a benefit performance for the South Portland Historical Society. Tickets may be purchased at the door for $12 each (cash or check, please). Not recommended for ages 13 and under.

03-07-08 Thornton Heights Stores

Our thanks goes to Kevin Bagley for sharing these two images with us. The photo, at top right, was taken in February 1942 and shows the side-by-side store fronts of Taylor's Pharmacy and Burnett's (IGA) Market. The building was located at 561-563 Main Street. When Paul Davis took over Burnett's Market later in the decade, the store was known as Thornton Heights Market, and by the early 1950s, that store on the right side of the building had been converted to E.G. Shettleworth Co. 5 & 10 cent store. Taylor's Pharmacy operated from the left side of the building throughout, and when Shettleworth's closed in the early 1960s, the pharmacy expanded and occupied the entire building.

The second photo shows the long-standing Howard Johnson's Restaurant on Main Street, which opened around 1942. HoJo's
started out as a summertime restaurant and closed in the mid-1980s after over 40 years in business.

Seeking information – Mountain View Park

We would like to run an article on the WWII housing complex that was located off of Evans Street and Highland Avenue, where South Portland High School is now located. The Society has very little in its collection covering Mountain View Park and we hope that the public will help us to remedy that. If you have any photographs, news articles, community newsletters, or any other item from that housing complex, or if you lived there, we hope you will stop by our office in City Hall during open hours on Wednesdays from 10am to noon, or call Kathy at 767-7299. Thank you!

02-29-08 An Early Ferry Village Bakery

This delightful photograph is part of the Etta Gregory Watts collection at South Portland Historical Society. It is believed to be a late 19th century image of a bakery in Ferry Village. Like many businesses in South Portland in that time period, it looks to be a family-run business located in the proprietors' home. We hope that someone viewing this image might recognize it from their own family photo albums. If you know who this family was, please contact Kathy at 767-3268 or email to Kathy@barrenhillbooks.com.

Seeking information – Long Creek Terrace and the Westbrook Street Trailer Park

Summer may seem like a long way off right now, but the historical society is already thinking about its 2008 Summer Evening Chat series. Evening Chats are oral history programs where we can all learn more about our community from people who lived here in earlier years. In preparation, we are seeking photographs and information pertaining to the Clark's Pond area including the WWII housing complexes of Long Creek Terrace (in the area where Home Depot is now situated) and the Westbrook Street Trailer Park. If you have any photographs, news articles, community newsletters, or any other items from those housing complexes, or if you once lived there, we hope you will contact the South Portland Historical Society or stop by our office in City Hall during open hours on Wednesdays from 10am to noon, or call Kathy at 767-7299. Thank you!

02-22-08 Matrons’ Literary Club

By Joanne Langerman, curator
South Portland Historical Society

Perhaps reading group members would be interested in an early 20th century version of this popular and intellectually stimulating activity. The Matrons’ Literary Club was organized in South Portland by six women on November 20, 1906 and continued until 1976. The objective of the club was to provide mutual self-improvement combined with charity and helpfulness to those in need. Meeting bi-weekly in a member’s home, each meeting began with the singing of a patriotic song, followed by a unique roll call where each member responded with an interesting fact or quote. Then the study class was conducted by the designated member who had researched a current poet or author, or a topic from art, history, biography or literature. An open discussion period followed the presentation. The topics to be discussed were planned out on a yearly basis and published in a yearbook. For example, in October 1913, the group considered topics about Native Americans and on November 15, 1920 the work of Kate Douglass Wiggin was on the agenda. While strictly a club for women, men were allowed to attend once a year on Gentleman’s Night. The Matrons’ Literary Club became a member of the Maine Federation of Women’s Clubs in 1927. The MFWC, which still exists today, was founded in 1892, and is affiliated with the General Federation of
Women’s Clubs. The GFWC is one of the world’s largest and oldest women’s service organizations and has members not only in the United States but in more than 20 countries worldwide.

The South Portland Historical Society has the yearly programs of the Matrons’ Literary Club dating from 1913 until 1976 thanks to the generous donation from SP Historical Society member Kathy Rochon, whose grandmother Mabel Foss was a club member. The collection also includes a notebook of club minutes, handwritten notes and research, newspaper clippings about the club and its members, and the club’s gavel. Maybe you have relatives with memories of membership in this or other clubs and organizations that made up the social fabric of our community in years past. We’d love to hear from you!

02-15-08 Join Us! An Afternoon of Comedy
On Saturday, March 15th, local business owner and comedian Dennis Fogg will perform at “An Afternoon of Comedy” at the South Portland High School Auditorium at 1pm. Dennis will be joined by fellow comics, Tammy Pooler and Bo, along with master of ceremonies Chuck Igo, for an afternoon of laughs for a cause. The event is open to the public and is being sponsored jointly by the high school’s Key Club and Interact Group, as a benefit for the South Portland Historical Society.
Opening for the comedians will be the local band, Box O Crackers, in a pre-St. Patrick’s Day performance. This Irish folk band consists of several South Portland firefighters, including guitar player Jason Perry (Engine 8), lead singer David Finitsis (Engine 5) and Tom Haskell (retired SPFD captain) on banjo. Also in the band is Anne Murray (a Portland teacher) on mandolin/accordion and keyboard player Tess (Maine Medical Center).
Many locals know Dennis Fogg as the owner of the South Portland landmark, Uncle Andy’s Cafe. Dennis often regales his customers with his quick wit and funny take on local events. He has become nationally known as a comedian and performs at the Comedy Connection in Portland and many other venues. Dennis will be joined by fellow comedians Tammy Pooler and Bo. All three comedians are part of Lease-A-Laugh, a comedic booking agency featuring New England’s best stand-up comedians.
We hope you’ll join us for a fun afternoon that will also help raise money for the Society’s capital campaign for the Cushing’s Point House. Ticket prices are $10 in advance or $12 at the door. Cash or check, please. Tickets are available for purchase now at Hannaford Supermarket-Mill Creek, Uncle Andy’s Café, or J.P. Thornton’s. FMI call 767-3268 or visit www.southportland.org.

02-08-08 Captain Daniel Willard – “Mr. Lincoln”
With Abraham Lincoln’s birthday coming next week, it seemed the perfect time to write about South Portland’s own “Mr. Lincoln” – Captain Daniel D. Willard. Also known as “Yankee Dan”, Daniel Willard was a well-known sea captain in ports along the east coast. With his striking resemblance to our 16th American president, Captain Willard was invited to attend the annual banquets of Portland’s Lincoln Club, dressed in a tall hat and long coat, in the style of Lincoln.

Daniel Willard was born in the Point Village section of South Portland (now known as Willard) and after his mother died when he was four years old, he went to live with his relatives on Chebeague Island. In a newspaper interview, Captain Willard told the unbelievable story of how he first started his seafaring career. At the age of only 10 years, he shipped out for the first time as a cook on a sloop express. It is a miracle that he survived, as that ship was wrecked in a storm and he and the crew had to be rescued. He shipped out for the second time when he was 12 years old, again as a cook, this time on a small schooner and again, the ship was wrecked, this time in a collision with another vessel where many men were lost.

After such an unlucky start to his career, it is amazing that he went on to work his way up through the ranks, eventually becoming master of his own vessel. Captain Willard lived through a third shipwreck, about the Perseverance - this ship loaded with a large granite tomb, sailing from Hallowell and bound for New York. In a heavy storm, the ship hit a ledge and ended up going down head first, the crew escaping off the stern as she went down; the crew was picked up from their life boat the next morning.

Captain Willard went on to command the schooner Nellie F. Sawyer for 22 years. He retired in 1912 at the age of 78 and continued to live on at his home on Sawyer Street until his death in 1916. Thanks to Society member, Carol Campbell, for providing research material for this article.

Identifying Your Family Photographs
On Saturday, February 16th at 1pm, South Portland Historical Society board member David Mishkin will present a lecture and slide show entitled “Identifying Your Family Photographs” at the South Portland Community Center. Many families have old photographs hidden away in attics, basements or photo albums. Some photographs are very old and it is difficult to tell one photographic process from the other. David’s lecture and slide show will enable you to tell the difference between a tintype and a daguerreotype, between an albumen and a salt print. You will learn how to identify each photographic process and the years they were popular. Having this information might enable you to determine if the relative is a great-grandparent or a great, great-grandparent - information that is very helpful for those studying their family history. You are encouraged to bring your photographs with you for further identification.

Admission is free to members of the South Portland Historical Society; there is a $5 fee for non-members. FMI, call 799-3937.

02-01-08 Sam Silverman’s Popcorn Stand and the Dory
Willard Beach is a popular spot for locals, but I often wonder how many people recognize the South Portland landmark that still sits there on the beach, now half covered by sand. On the beach at the foot of Willard Street, you can still see the structure that once was Sam Silverman's popcorn stand in the 1930s and '40s, and later the Dory in the early 1970s, run by Tom and Alice Carmody. It's a mind-picture that brings a lot of nostalgia to some residents, including former South Portlanders who have moved away, such as George Frame (SPHS class of 1960) who sent the photo, at right, to the Society. Mr. Frame's photo was taken around 1948 after the popcorn stand had closed. The photo below shows the same building as it is today. There are a few other pictures of the popcorn stand in the 1930s and '40s and a story about Sam Silverman in my book on South Portland's neighborhood stores. Former South Portland historian, Earle Angell, had his very first job at Sam Silverman's popcorn stand. I bet it was a fun, breezy place to be on a summer day. We have not seen any pictures of the building during the time that it was operating as the Dory and open for business. Surely someone must have one - please let us know if you do!

01-25-08 United Order of the Golden Cross

There were many fraternal organizations in operation in the late-1800s and early-1900s across America, serving varied purposes: social, philanthropic, community service and other needs. South Portland certainly did not miss out on the wave of groups. In the early- to mid-1900s, South Portland had several fraternal groups which we no longer see today, among them the Loyal Order of Moose (now in Scarborough), the Fraternal Order of Eagles, the Order of Knights of Pythias, and the Improved Order of Red Men.

One group which I had not been aware of until recently was the United Order of the Golden Cross. The photo, at right, from the Etta Gregory Watts collection at the South Portland Historical Society, shows a group of men and women posing for a formal picture. The photograph was labeled “Golden Cross Lodge” and is believed to be a commandery of the Golden Cross located in South Portland.

The United Order of the Golden Cross was a fraternal benefit society, founded in 1876 in New England by a group of Freemasons who formed the organization in order to provide life insurance to members. Its members agreed to abstain from alcohol consumption. The UOGC was reportedly the first fraternal group to admit both men and women equally into its membership.

Thank you, National Distributors! Jeff Kane, president of National Distributors, presents a check to the South Portland Historical Society in support of its capital campaign for
The governing body of the organization was called the “Grand Commandery” and it was later headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee with 71 lodges located in eight states and Washington DC. The local lodges were known as “Commanderies.” In 1962, the UOGC merged with a similar organization, Woodmen of the World.

While seeking information related to the Golden Cross in South Portland, I came up with two references. One Golden Cross lodge was the Ocean View Commandery, No. 233, definitely in South Portland, but unclear as to the exact location or neighborhood. Another lodge was listed as the Gorges Commandery, No. 313 – it is unclear if this lodge was in South Portland, but a member of the Gorges Commandery was Fred G. Hamilton, who also served as an alderman and then mayor of South Portland in 1908 and 1909. Hamilton was also a member of People’s Methodist Church and is believed to have lived at 84 Broadway, so it is possible that the Gorges Commandery could have been located in Ferry Village.

If you have any information about the Golden Cross Lodge in South Portland, we would appreciate hearing from you. Please contact Kathy@barrenhillbooks.com or call Kathy at 767-3268.

01-18-08 Admiral Robert E. Peary

Monuments and Markers in South Portland:

Guest columnist: Craig Skelton, member, South Portland Historical Society

Now that Santa has come and gone from his North Pole home, another visitor to that location and other worldly places with ties to South Portland comes to mind.

You may have been in one of thousands of cars passing by a plaque on Cottage Road in memory of Admiral Robert E. Peary. That marker rests on the grounds of the South Portland Public Library and is located directly across from the front door entrance to Holy Cross Church.

Born in Cresson Pennsylvania in 1856, “Bertie,” as his mother called him, lived there until age three when the untimely death of his father prompted mother and son to move here to be close to her family.

Although there is not much to tell about the few boyhood years Admiral Peary lived in South Portland (which was then known as Cape Elizabeth), a good read on events in his life is PEARY: The Explorer and the Man by John Edward Weems. The book is based largely on the Peary Papers collected by Robert Peary’s daughter Marie Peary Stafford of Brunswick Maine.

For a while, Mrs. Peary and her son lived in the home of Mr. & Mrs. Evans, which was located on the corner of Broadway and Evans Street and which also housed a store and post office. Mrs. Evans was the sister of Mary Peary. The book refers to Bertie’s childhood school attendance as being in “a red building near their Cape Elizabeth home.” The actual school Robert Peary attended could have been one of several located nearby and sources contacted for this article were not able to determine which school he attended. During that time period, the Elm Street School on the corner of Broadway and Elm Street was in operation, as was another school on the corner of Highland Avenue and Evans Street.

I would like to thank Kevin Davis and Marie Chenevert from the Public Library for their efforts in making this article possible. Writing an article covering historical events involves a lot of research and sometimes
the facts are beyond reach. You can help with future articles in the Sentry and help the South Portland Historical Society assemble a connection to our past by donating pictures, documents or artifacts that fill in the blanks of our history.

01-11-08 Arthur Lailer, Grocer

Here is an incredible example of the power of the Internet. We were initially contacted about this image by a postcard collector in Indiana. She collects real photo postcards and after doing some genealogy research on the Lailer family on her computer, suspected this photo might have been taken in South Portland. She found our website and contacted us about the postcard. We were very happy to confirm the image. The large building behind the wagon is indeed the Knights of Pythias hall in Ferry Village; it once stood at 53 Preble Street, on the corner of Preble and High Streets. Although the exterior had undergone a facelift by World War II, we were able to positively identify the building with several other features.

The horse and wagon would have belonged to Arthur C. Lailer, a grocer a few doors down at 71 Preble Street. We do not know if that is Arthur Lailer in the wagon or not (if you know, please contact us!). Arthur Lailer ran the store at 71 Preble from about 1912 to 1920, then George Lailer ran the store from 1920 to 1923, then John Mackin briefly, and Arthur Lailer again from 1924 to 1931. The store had several other operators in later years: Kenneth Lunt; R.M. and R.E. Gott; Crockett's Store in the late 1930s; and then Ray's Market in the early 1940s.

The South Portland Historical Society is always seeking to preserve historic South Portland images such as this. If you have images of early South Portland, or of buildings or businesses that are no longer operating, please contact the Society. If you want to keep your original photos, we can scan the images so that the rest of South Portland can enjoy them.

Recent Grant Awards

The South Portland Historical Society received several grant awards over the holidays: from the Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust, a grant of $10,000; the Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust awarded a grant of $4,000; and the Edward H. Daveis Benevolent Fund awarded a $3,500 grant. The Society seeks to purchase the Cushing's Point House on Madison Street, on the former site of the WWII shipyards, as a permanent home and museum. Over $140,000 has been raised so far. We hope you will be a part of creating this legacy for South Portland.

01-04-08 South Portland Ice Houses

In earlier times, ice houses abounded in South Portland. Most of the operations were located toward the western end of the city, around Clark's Pond, Long Creek, Ligonia and Barberry Creek. There were a few farther east, however, such as the ice cutting operation at Hinckley Park and another just off of Broadway, across from Kelley Street.

As most South Portland natives are aware, Clark's Pond had an ice house in the early to mid-1900s, on the southern shore of the pond. But on the 1871 F.W. Beers & Co. atlas, an ice house is clearly located on the Westbrook Street side of Clark's Pond. This earlier ice house (which we believe is the one shown in the photograph, at right) was on the eastern shore of Clark's Pond, roughly on the spot where the dam is that leads to Long Creek. Also in 1871, right next to the early ice house is the home belonging to D.W. Clark.

Along Barberry Creek, the Clark & Chaplin Ice Company had an ice house on the shore next to the Forest City Cemetery. This ice house is depicted on the 1871 atlas. On the Geo. N. Colby & Co. atlas of 1884, the Clark & Chaplin ice house on Barberry Creek had clearly expanded – it was quite large, with a sizeable wharf built on the Fore River side, and a dam built across Barberry Creek (to connect with Kelsey Street) creating a rather large ice pond behind it (which we call the “other” Clark’s Pond).
Also on the 1884 atlas, the Calvary Pond had two ice houses, one on the north shore, one on the south (this was close to the area where there are two on-ramps to 295 now – the ones from Main Street and Lincoln Street).

Before the advent of the electric refrigerator, the need for ice was a part of everyday life. Some ice cutting operations were clearly commercial and on a large scale. Some were smaller and little evidence remains today. We have heard stories of the ice house on the old Phinney Pond. This was a pond in the vicinity of the 295 on-ramp from Westbrook Street; the pond was filled in order to construct the ramp. Only some cat-o-nine tails remain there to remind us of a pond from long ago.

If you have information on any ice houses in South Portland, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Kathy at 767-3268 or at Kathy@BarrenHillBooks.com.