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01-27-12 Jensen Dairy Farm
01-13-12 Historical Society seeks local drug store-related items

12-28-12 Then and Now – Dairy Queen
There have been so many changes in South Portland over the years, it’s kind of fun to see a set of then-and-now photos, taken about 60 years apart, that show some things that haven’t changed. There are a few foods that South Portlanders love that give certain businesses staying power, among them pizza, doughnuts, and ice cream. On South Portland’s eastern end, Red’s Dairy Freeze has enjoyed a loyal fan base since 1952, so it’s no surprise that the western side of the city has enjoyed their Dairy Queen for so many decades, as well.

This week’s historic photograph comes to us courtesy of John Plunkett and shows the Dairy Queen at Cash Corner in the early 1950s. Although some renovations have occurred over the years, the basic structure of the building remains the same as it was in its early years. As winter is now settling in around us, we can all look forward to our ice cream shops reopening in just a few months’ time.

All of us at South Portland Historical Society send our wishes to you and your family for a happy and healthy new year!

12-21-12 Then and Now – Shaw’s Supermarket in Mill Creek

This week’s Window on the Past is a great image of the first Shaw’s Supermarket location in Mill Creek. Our grateful thanks goes out to John Plunkett for sending along the image from the early 1950s. Shaw’s Supermarket first opened on Ocean Street in 1951; as you can see from the photograph that was just taken this week, the first supermarket location is now home to Mister Bagel and a few other storefronts. We know that the historic photograph was taken prior to 1955, as the Mill Creek Shopping Center had not been built yet.

The Mill Creek Shopping Center opened in 1955 and was considered the first strip mall in the state of Maine. With hindsight, we see that the businesses in the shopping plaza were successful in their marketing of the “convenience” of one-stop shopping. Prior to that point, most people shopped at stores in their own neighborhood; getting in a car to go to a shopping place was not the societal norm of that time. The change in shopping habits was a trend that spread across the country, and as the shopping plazas and malls became more popular, we saw a gradual closing of the neighborhood mom-and-pop stores.

Ten years after it first opened in South Portland, Shaw’s moved to a second location in Mill Creek – to the other end of the Mill Creek Shopping Center where they built an addition for a larger supermarket. That site is where Shoppers Hardware and Pet Life are now located. It wasn’t until October 1990 that Shaw’s moved into its third and present location, in the Mill Creek Plaza on Waterman Drive.

Note to readers: this is the last weekend to visit the museum at Bug Light Park for the 2012 season. The museum and gift shop will be open Saturday and Sunday, December 22 and 23, from 10am to 4pm. The museum will then be closed until its 2013 season starts in May. The South Portland Historical Society’s activities continue year-round, of course. To reach the historical society in the winter, call 767-7299 or visit us at http://www.sphistory.org/ or on Facebook at South Portland Historical Society. Happy Holidays!

12-14-12 Changes in Thornton Heights
The Thornton Heights exhibit is in its final days at the museum at Bug Light Park. Only two weekends are left to see some of the interesting photographs and artifacts related to this neighborhood along Main Street/Route 1 in South Portland. To reach the museum, take Broadway east to the ocean, turn left on Breakwater Drive, then turn right onto Madison Street that leads into the park. FMI, call 767-7299.

Looking at just one location in Thornton Heights, we have a series of “then and now” pictures this week showing 609 Main Street. In the circa 1945 photo, we see the building where King Cole Foods got its start making potato chips. By 1947, King Cole had built and moved to a much larger facility on Cash Street. The circa 1950 photograph shows the same building but with the gas pumps and building addition of the Tydol service station. A gas station was located on this site for many decades. The last photo was taken this week. Notice the changes to St. John’s Church over the years, as well.

12-07-12 Sparky, the Kaler School Crossing Guard

The South Portland Historical Society created a program series back in 2007 known as Evening Chats. These oral history programs are designed to capture and preserve the memories of both past and current residents. So much of what happens in life is never written down, so we value these programs and the wonderful stories that are shared and recorded for future generations.

In November, we held the most recent installment in this series, this time covering the Pleasantdale neighborhood. We had a full room of residents who remembered many different periods of time and who shared memories of growing up in the area of South Portland that lies between Anthoine and Evans Streets. Thank you to Tom Blake who moderated this program and shared his own memories of growing up in the neighborhood. In preparation for the program, many current and former residents also came forward with some wonderful photographs to share showing people and places familiar to Pleasantdale.

The accompanying photograph came to us courtesy of Judith Murphy. It is a delightful image from 1959 showing Harold “Sparky” Coolbroth, who worked as the janitor at Kaler School and who the “kids” from that time remembered as being their beloved crossing guard, as well.

The historical society will be showcasing Pleasantdale in an exhibit at the museum next year. If you have photographs to share of the people or places of this neighborhood, we hope that you will contact the historical society at 767-7299 or at its museum at 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland.

11-30-12 Thornton Heights exhibit wrapping up at museum
The South Portland Historical Society’s museum at Bug Light Park will be finishing up its 2012 season on Sunday, December 23rd. The accompanying photograph has been included in the Thornton Heights exhibit at the museum this year; it comes from the Gary Chisholm collection at the society and shows Gary Chisholm and Billy Kirk with their baseball coach, Dan Kennedy, circa 1959. Gary and Billy were being recognized here as the top sellers in their Sunset Park Farm League’s fruitcake fundraiser.

The Thornton Heights exhibit is a temporary exhibit that you don’t want to miss. Even if you haven’t lived in Thornton Heights, the neighborhood is home to Main Street which featured popular sites like Bennett’s Ice Cream Bar, Howard Johnson’s, and the old A & W Restaurant. The museum will undergo changes over the winter in preparation for next season, which starts in May. One of those changes will be the removal of the Thornton Heights exhibit and mounting in its place a new exhibit covering the history of the Pleasantdale neighborhood.

Another way you can help your historical society is to consider shopping at the museum gift shop for the holidays. The gift shop focuses on locally-made items. There are many talented residents of South Portland, Cape Elizabeth, and Portland who have their products available as a wonderful gift alternative. Your purchases support both the historical society and these people here in our community. Don’t forget the just-released book "A History of Cape Elizabeth and South Portland Prior to 1895" which would make a great gift for anyone who lives in South Portland or Cape Elizabeth. The museum and gift shop will be open on Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 4pm.

**A Child’s Christmas in Wales – recital by Jack Nordby on December 2nd**

On Sunday, December 2nd at 1pm, Society member Jack Nordby will recite the Dylan Thomas classic, "A Child’s Christmas in Wales" at the historical society’s museum at Bug Light Park. "A Child's Christmas in Wales" is a light much-loved almost lyrical tale of childhood Christmas memories. Full of beauty and wonder this "prose-poem" harkens back to a simpler time, a nostalgic time. Filled with alliteration, this 25-minute star of Thomas’ work is best heard aloud for the "music" in the words.

Jack Nordby is a South Portland resident who originally grew up in the Black Hills of western South Dakota. His father began his career as an educator teaching English and coaching forensics and speech. Consequently, verbal expression was a serious practice in their home.Jack participated in competitive forensics including debate, oratory and oral interpretation throughout high school and received a B.A. degree from Emerson College. He retired four years ago from a 30-year career as an airline pilot.

There is no charge for admission, although donations are most welcome. FMI, call 767-7299.

**11-23-12 South Portland Historical Society**

Thanks to over 500 thoughtful and generous residents of South Portland, we enjoy an active and thriving local historical society in South Portland today. That hasn’t always been the case and we most certainly are grateful not just at Thanksgiving, but all year long, for the many members and volunteers who willingly take a part in preserving history in our community and using our own stories to gain a better understanding of our country’s history, as well.

The South Portland Historical Society was founded back in 1964 by a group of people who had a keen appreciation for our community’s history. The organization was first known as the “Cape Historical Society” and held its first meeting on Sept. 17, 1964 in the SP City Hall Council Chambers. At this first meeting, members enrolled and paid dues, Earle Angell gave a program on the history of South Portland.
and Cape Elizabeth, and a nominating committee was formed to elect officers. The first officers and directors were the following: Marion Small, president; Arthur Cameron, vice president; Geraldine Bickford, secretary, Marjorie Murphy, treasurer; Earle Angell, historian; William Wadman, curator; Alvah Small; Frieda Holman; William Dow; Rosella Loveitt; and Eugene Wilkin.

Over the years, the historical society has changed its name a few times, but has remained actively preserving historic materials, offering lectures and programs, and, when it has had the space available, has curated exhibits to showcase our community’s history.

We are so very grateful now to be known as the South Portland Historical Society and to have such a wonderful, permanent home at our Cushing’s Point Museum at Bug Light Park. We are thankful for the wonderful collection of historic items which we care for and that continues to grow through the gifts of many. It has been the people of this community who have made this possible. If you have not yet supported this effort this year, please join your neighbors in making a gift to the South Portland Historical Society’s annual fundraising drive. Checks can be mailed or dropped off at the museum at 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland, ME 04106. Credit card donations can be made by visiting http://www.sphistory.org/ or calling us at 767-7299. With your support, we will continue to have a vibrant local historical society in South Portland!

11-16-12 War Memorial Music Shell

This week’s Window on the Past is an interesting glimpse of the War Memorial Music Shell that was sponsored by the Stewart P. Morrill Post 35, American Legion and the Stewart P. Morrill Post Auxiliary Unit 35. The music shell was built on the grounds of what is now Mahoney Middle School (although the school was South Portland High School at that time). The ground breaking was on May 17, 1947, and the completed music shell was dedicated on July 1st of that same year. To put this in perspective, keep in mind that World War II ended in 1945. The shipyards on South Portland’s east end had all closed, putting thousands of people out of work in Greater Portland. The City embarked on a plan to create economic development; improving the quality of life to entice businesses to move here to provide jobs. The creation of Mill Creek Park started in 1945, converting the city dump in the center of town into a recreational space. The bath house at Willard Beach was also built. The American Legion’s contribution of this music shell would have been another added draw to our city.

The music shell was used frequently in its first three seasons when the post organized concerts in the 2,000 seat venue, but the shell was used only occasionally over the following ten years after it had been deeded to the City. It was sold around 1960 and removed. The shell was later reassembled at Colby College and renamed in honor of Ralph Gould of Cape Elizabeth.

Note to readers: The South Portland Historical Society’s museum at Bug Light Park is still open, but the 2012 season is winding down quickly. Museum hours are Saturdays and Sundays, 10am to 4pm, through December. Also, don’t miss out on your chance to pick up a copy of A History of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, Including South Portland Prior to 1895 which was just republished; it is available in the museum gift shop, along with other local gift ideas for the holidays. Proceeds support the museum. FMI, call 767-7299.

11-09-12 Pleasantdale Memories

We are so grateful to Muriel Blanchard who stopped in to the museum this past weekend with a wonderful donation of photographs and other materials related to South Portland’s Pleasantdale neighborhood. Some of the photographs included rare images of the Marion Street School (the school that preceded Dyer School), the Reynolds School and the old Kaler School. She also brought in the accompanying photograph that shows people coming out of the Elm Street United Methodist Church.
Of course, the Elm Street Church holds special meaning for me, as my family moved here in the early 1970s when my father became the minister at that church. I have many memories of church services, Sunday school (sometimes with my mom as the Sunday school teacher), craft fairs, helping with the church newsletter, singing with the choir, and so many other varied events and activities. For many people, the church was the heart of the neighborhood.

We hope that others who have lived or worked in the Pleasantdale neighborhood will join us next week for a special oral history event. On Friday, November 16 at 6:30pm, in the Council Chambers at City Hall, the South Portland Historical Society’s Evening Chat series will continue with a new program covering the history of this neighborhood that lies between Anthoine and Evans Streets, from Highland Avenue to Turner’s Island on the Fore River. Schools in this neighborhood have included Kaler, Reynolds, Marion Street, Dyer, Evans Street, and the Elm Street School. Technically, even the high school is located in the Pleasantdale neighborhood. The event will be filmed for preservation by SPC-TV. We hope current and former residents will join us to help preserve the history of Pleasantdale. FMI, call 767-7299.

11-02-12 World War II Honor Roll in Pleasantdale

As the historical society prepares for the Evening Chat program on the Pleasantdale neighborhood, we are going through our archives to find photographs and artifacts. We also encourage residents to look through their own photo albums and drawers to try to locate images and memorabilia from Pleasantdale (roughly the neighborhood between Evans and Anthoine Streets). In 2013, the society’s museum will feature an exhibit covering the history of that neighborhood.

Two photographs donated by Russell Emery show the large wooden “honor roll” that was erected in the winter of 1942/43 to honor neighborhood residents who were then serving in World War II. The large board stood close to the point of land where Hill Street intersects with Broadway, between the two streets. One photograph gives us a close up view of the board, while the other gives us a better idea of exactly where the board was located.

Back in December of 2006, Craig Skelton wrote a history column in the Sentry which covered the subsequent WWII memorial that was put in and dedicated on May 30, 1951 in Pleasantdale;

that stone/plaque still stands on the site. In Skelton’s column, the photo shown (that was donated by Isabelle Williams) pictured not only the new memorial, but also the large honor roll board that was covered by a large drape; the honor roll board was taken down shortly after the dedication of the new memorial in 1951. One question we get from time to time is, “What happened to that honor roll board?” If you have any idea what became of it, please call the society. It may have been thrown away, but we would at least like to document what was done with it.

The oral history program about Pleasantdale will be held on Friday, November 16 at 6:30pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall. If you have photographs, memorabilia, or stories to share about growing up, living, working, or recreating in the Pleasantdale neighborhood, please contact the historical society at 767-7299, on Facebook, by email at sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com, or at 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland, ME 04106.

10-26-12 Date Set for Preservation of Pleasantdale Memories
Do you remember Ward’s Drug Store, Whitehall or the Moose Lodge, or going to Kaler School? Did you ever go sliding at the “Gully”? We want to talk with you! In another installment of the historical society’s popular Evening Chat series, we will be meeting in the Council Chambers at City Hall at 6:30pm on Friday, November 16 to talk about the Pleasantdale neighborhood. This neighborhood covers the areas between Anthoine Street and Evans Street, and Highland Avenue to the South Portland waterfront at Turner’s Island. This program is intended to preserve memories and oral history related to this neighborhood, and also to help the Society prepare for mounting a new exhibit in the museum in 2013.

Evening Chats are oral history programs that are open to the public and which are filmed by South Portland Community Television for preservation. We will begin the Chat promptly at 6:30pm with a short slide show of historic photographs of the area. Participants will then be invited to participate in a round table discussion and/or just listen in to learn more about one of South Portland’s neighborhoods. The program is later edited and aired on SPC-TV.

If you have ever lived or worked in Pleasantdale or Turner’s Island, we hope that you will join us. Also, if you know of someone who has lived in the neighborhood for many, many years, we hope that you will help us get the word to them about this important preservation event. We also continue to seek old photographs of Pleasantdale and surrounding neighborhoods; please contact us at 767-7299 before the meeting if you have photos to share so that we can incorporate them into the slide show so that everyone can see them. If you want to keep your original photos, we can simply scan the images to include them.

10-16-12 Graveyard or Cemetery?

Do you know the difference between a graveyard and a cemetery? Why some gravestones feature symbols like urns, weeping willows, lambs, or skulls? Cemeteries and graveyards can tell a lot about the customs of local societies over the generations. With the art and symbolism on gravestones, a cemetery can be not only a final resting place for our ancestors, but also an outdoor museum of sorts, with stories being told if only we know how to read them.

This Saturday, October 20 at 11am, I will answer those questions and more as I lead a tour of Mount Pleasant Cemetery on Meeting House Hill; the tour is free for current historical society members, and non-members are welcome to attend with a $10 donation. We will meet on the Sawyer Street side of the cemetery and will spend about 45 minutes walking through the cemetery while learning about South Portland’s past and many of the people who played a role in our community through the years. We’ll talk about American history, local history, care of cemeteries and more. The tour is weather-dependent; if it rains, please call the society at 767-7299 to find out about rescheduling information. Hope to see you there!

10-12-12 Thornton Heights exhibit is winding down
If you haven’t yet visited the South Portland Historical Society’s museum at Bug Light Park this year, you’ll want to make a note on your calendar to do so very soon. The museum is still open every day in October, but the daily hours will end on October 28. After that date, the museum will be open only on weekends in November and December, through Christmas when our season ends.

We have enjoyed presenting this year’s exhibit on Thornton Heights, Sunset Park and Country Gardens and some of our volunteers, like retired firefighter Joseph Nalbach, have been longtime residents of the neighborhood so have been able to share a lot of the flavor of that part of the city. Each year we feature a different neighborhood in the museum, so when we close for the season in December, we will be removing this exhibit to make way for the 2013 exhibit on the Pleasantdale and Turner’s Island neighborhoods. In preparation for that exhibit, we will hold an Evening Chat/oral history night on Friday, November 16, when we will ask current and former residents of Pleasantdale to help us preserve the history of their neighborhood. More information on that event will be published in a future column.

The accompanying photograph shows a great new item added to our collection this year. This menu from the A & W Restaurant on Main Street is a fun, nostalgic item which is on exhibit through December. Old menus are always interesting, especially to younger people who are usually amazed to see the old prices. The A & W was a favorite restaurant for many ~ and a note to any entrepreneurs out there, many of our visitors have agreed that they want the A & W to come back to South Portland!

**Mount Pleasant Cemetery tour to take place Saturday, October 20**

On Saturday, October 20 at 11am, join the historical society's director, Kathy DiPhilippo, for a tour of one of South Portland's oldest cemeteries, the historic Mount Pleasant Cemetery on Meeting House Hill. Originally formed around the time of the Old North Church in 1734, the cemetery has a history that spans from colonial times to present day; the oldest recorded burial there was in 1742. The cemetery has served as the final resting place for many residents of the Willard, Ferry Village and Meeting House Hill neighborhoods. The tour is free for current members of the SP Historical Society; $10 for non-members. Meet on the Sawyer Street side. FMI, call 767-7299.

**10-05-12 First annual Bug Light 5K Run/Walk this Sunday**

The South Portland Historical Society, the South Portland Land Trust, and Anthem BlueCross and BlueShield are excited to be partnering on a new community road race. The Bug Light 5K will start at 9am on Sunday ~ more than 400 runners and walkers will begin at the boat launch area at Bug Light Park and will follow the coastal course around the city's historic east end. The course will have a view of both of South Portland's lighthouses, Fort Preble and the SMCC campus, and then will run through Willard Square and back to Bug Light Park to finish in front of Bug Light.

In addition to volunteers from both non-profits, the Coast Guard Group Portland Division Naval Sea Cadets will be providing much of the volunteer help needed to make this a smooth running event. Our thanks to all of them and to the many sponsors of this year's inaugural run: presenting sponsor, Anthem BlueCross and BlueShield; media sponsor, Big Hits Y100.9; lightkeeper sponsors, Snap Fitness and the Maine Mall; harbor watch sponsors, Soma Massage & Wellness and Noyes Hall & Allen Insurance; and fleet sponsors, Hannaford Supermarkets and the City of South Portland. Race promotions have been provided by 19 Oaks Strategic Marketing. Thanks also to Coca Cola, Mister Bagel (Mill Creek and Maine Mall), and McDonald's in Mill Creek for additional donations of product for participants.

Proceeds from the Bug Light 5K will benefit both the South Portland Historical Society and South Portland
South Portland has a long history of neighborhood schools, many of which have closed over the past half century. Located on Broadway, near the intersection of Evans Street, was the Reynolds School building. 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.

The accompanying photograph shows the Reynolds School in the process of being demolished. The photo, taken by Peter and Paul Jeffery in 1982, captures the old Chevron station in the foreground (where we’ll soon enjoy fresh doughnuts), and the Reynolds School across the street; while the roof is gone from the school building, the cupola can still be seen.

This week’s Window on the Past looks at the Ferry Village waterfront circa 1905. Several beautiful schooners are tied up at a wharf, near the ferry terminal where residents could catch the ferry to Portland instead of going all the way to Knightville to go over the bridge. In the distance, the two grain elevators at the Grand Trunk Railway station can be seen on the Portland waterfront. The Grand Trunk Railway was a tremendous feat of economic development in the mid-1800s. The use of Portland as a trading port had dwindled by the 1840s, so the establishment of the rail line to Montreal helped to differentiate Portland from the ports in Massachusetts. The Grand Trunk Railway led to increased activity on the Portland waterfront, and also helped to support a thriving shipyard industry in South Portland over several decades. The photograph comes from the Detroit Publishing Co. collection at the Library of Congress.

Reminder to readers: The South Portland Historical Society is hosting a book launch event at the South Portland Community Center on Friday, Sept 21 at 7pm, celebrating the release of the republished book, “A History of Cape Elizabeth, Maine: including South Portland prior to 1895,” originally written and published by Professor William B. Jordan, Jr. in 1965. Professor Jordan will be attending the event to sign copies of the book. Books will be available for purchase at the event, and are also now available for sale at the historical society’s museum at Bug Light Park. FMI, call 767-7299.

09-28-12 Reynolds School demolition

09-21-12 A View of the Ferry Village Waterfront

09-14-12 Society republishes “A History of Cape Elizabeth”
The South Portland Historical Society is pleased to announce the republication of the book “A History of Cape Elizabeth, Maine.” The history volume, originally written and published by Professor William B. Jordan, Jr. in 1965, has been republished thanks to the generosity of Prof. Jordan; Jordan donated the copyright to the South Portland Historical Society so that it could continue to make the book available to the public. Proceeds will benefit the historical society.

A special book launch event will take place on Friday, September 21, at 7pm at the South Portland Community Center. Books will be available for sale at the event and Mr. Jordan will be present to sign copies of the book.

Many people may not realize that this history of Cape Elizabeth is also the history of South Portland, as the communities were actually one and the same town prior to 1895. Jordan’s work highlights the early settlement of this area and the rich history of our two communities, and includes a very helpful index. To better indicate the content of the book to those who aren’t familiar with the history, the historical society has added a subtitle to the book, “including South Portland prior to 1895.”

“A History of Cape Elizabeth, Maine: including South Portland prior to 1895” is also available for sale now at the historical society’s museum at Bug Light Park. FMI, call 767-7299.

09-07-12 Fisherman's Point

In response to our column of April 27th this year, we received several responses from residents with information about the fishing shacks at Fisherman’s Point. We would like to especially thank Charles Gavett for his help in documenting the history of these landmarks in South Portland. The Willard neighborhood and Willard Beach had a long history as part of a working waterfront – home base to many fishermen and lobstermen. Mr. Gavett provided several photographs, drawings, information and other pieces which will go a long way toward preserving the history of the point. We hope readers will enjoy these glimpses of Fisherman's Point in earlier times.

08-31-12 South Portland’s Oldest Home
At the historical society, we often hear about how many old buildings and landmarks have been lost over the years, so we are hoping that residents will help us work on a fun, positive project. We would like to develop a list of South Portland’s oldest, still-standing buildings, and try to narrow it down to which home is the oldest. One would think that such a list would exist already, but it does not. An effort was made several decades ago to inventory our oldest homes, but the nomination process is not exactly known and the houses inventoried have a wide range of dates. An oldest home was never identified. We have heard claims over the years that one house is the oldest, and then someone else will point to another.

We hope you can help us in this process of identifying South Portland’s truly oldest home. Of course, we know from history that no homes from the 1600s are still in existence in South Portland. The earliest residence would have to date to sometime in the 1700s. If you know of a home or building that you think was built in the 1700s, would you please contact the historical society to let us know its address? Once we compile the list of 1700s-era homes, we will do the research to attempt to establish which exact home is South Portland’s oldest. When we have researched and found our oldest candidate, we will announce it – and invite anyone to challenge it!

If you have a potential nominee, please let us know at sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com, at 767-7299, or at our museum at 55 Bug Light Park. It doesn’t have to be your own home – if there is a home in your neighborhood that you think is the oldest, just let us know.

08-24-12 Thornton Heights Community Club

At the South Portland Historical Society’s museum at Bug Light Park, a different neighborhood is featured in one of the exhibits each year. While we enjoy exhibiting photographs and artifacts from the Society’s archives, we also like to use the exhibit to encourage museum-goers to help us fill gaps in the Society’s collections. With the 2012 Thornton Heights exhibit, we have already had some visitors return with artifacts related to some of the old restaurants and stores on Main Street, along with various photographs from the neighborhood.

One piece of Thornton Heights history that we are seeking your help with is the Thornton Heights Community Club. The Club House building was located at 632 Main Street, on the corner of Thornton Avenue, on the site now occupied by the Knights Inn. The Community Club appears to have been active in the 1920s and ‘30s. The South Portland school system leased classroom space in the building in the 1930s to provide relief for overcrowding at the Thornton Heights School. Schools across the city faced similar overcrowded conditions as the school population grew from 1,941 in 1920 to 3,567 in 1930. Even the construction of the Lincoln, Kaler, and Roosevelt Schools in the 1920s didn’t fix the problems.

The accompanying 1935 photograph comes to us courtesy of Kevin Bagley; it shows the 8th grade class which attended school at the Thornton Heights Community Club. While some students in Thornton Heights were attending school at this leased facility, other students in Ferry Village were sharing a similar situation as they attended school in a leased classroom in the Knights of Pythias Hall on the corner of Preble and High Streets.

We would like to learn more about the Thornton Heights Community Club – who met there, what activities took place there – and we are also seeking a photograph of the building. In the 1940s, the building became home to Allen’s Laundry Co., run by Raymond Allen. By the mid-1950s, the Sandman Motel was built on the site. If you have any information to share, please contact the South Portland Historical Society at 767-7299, sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com, or at 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland, ME 04106.
South Portland has had a long and interesting history in the potato chip business. Of course, King Cole Potato Chips started out on Main Street and later had a factory and distribution center on Cash Street, just down from Cash Corner. One of the founders of King Cole, Norman Cole, left and started the Humpty Dumpty potato chip business with George Robinson, Jr., just down Main Street in Scarborough. And the third large potato chip business was Circus Time Potato Chips.

According to Belle Graney, Circus Time was founded in 1958 on Anderson Street in Portland by her husband, John Graney, and her brother George Robinson, Jr. In the mid-1960s, they were convinced by the City Manager of South Portland, Bernal Allen, to move their operation to a new facility at 265 Western Avenue. In addition to regular potato chips, Circus Time also packaged and sold barbecue chips, popcorn, pretzels, and nuts.

John Graney and George Robinson did well with the business, and sold it in 1975. According to Graney, the new owners expanded the business, hiring more people and adding new routes, but the business was later bought up by a larger national food manufacturer which eventually closed the Western Avenue location. The site is now home to Kaplan University.

**08-10-12 Food Under the Sails - A Demonstration of Foodways at Sea – August 12**

During the first half of the 19th century, South Portland was known for shipbuilding, ship provisioning and ship repair of large, wooden sailing vessels, from schooners and barks, to brigs and clipper ships. With this rich history in mind, Susan McLellan Plaisted will present a historic cooking program, *Food under the Sails - A Demonstration of Foodways at Sea*, on Sunday, August 12th, from 1 to 4 pm at the South Portland Historical Society’s museum at Bug Light Park.

At this special afternoon event, Ms. Plaisted will demonstrate the cooking methods and types of foods that were popular on the wooden sailing ships of the mid-1800s. Visitors are welcome to visit at any time during the 1-4pm event, as it will be an on-going demonstration. This is a free event, open to the public.

Susan McLellan Plaisted is the proprietor of Heart to Hearth Cookery, a food history business based in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. She offers demonstrations of 17th century through 19th century Colonial American and European cooking methods, practices, and recipes, as well as pre-European-contact and post-European-contact Native American foodways. Her repertoire ranges from open pit, through down hearth, raised hearth, and cookstove cooking. Plaisted is presenting this program in South Portland in memory of her parents, Guy Stanwood and Ruth Ellen McLellan.

To reach the museum, take Broadway east to the ocean, turn left onto Breakwater Drive, then right on Madison Street that leads right into the park.

For GPS users, enter 1 Madison Street to obtain directions. For more information, call 767-7299 or visit www.sphistory.org.

**08-03-12 Then and Now - South Portland city dump, Cottage Road**
This week’s then-and-now photos show a significant change in the Mill Creek area. The early photo comes from the Mike Eastman Collection at the South Portland Historical Society, showing Cottage Road in the foreground with a terrific glimpse of the old city dump beyond, on the left half of the photo, before it was turned into Mill Creek Park. The long building in the right half of the photo is the old A & P store; now site of the Mill Creek Financial Center where Town & Country FCU and Noyes, Hall & Allen Insurance are now located. Another interesting piece in the older photograph is the billboard to the right of the A & P with an advertisement for Tydol. Billboards used to be quite common around the area of the dump. The dump was converted to Mill Creek Park from 1945 through 1955.

In the photo taken this week, we see the same bridge wall on Cottage Road going over the creek; at some point, the wall received an attractive topping off of brick. This location on Cottage Road is between Hannaford and the Mill Cove Apartments. The crossing for the Greenbelt Walkway now follows along where the train tracks used to run. With all of the trees at the edge of the park, it’s hard to see what lies beyond, but safe to say that the construction in the park is coming along at a good pace and we should have a much improved park come October.

**07-27-12 Then and Now - Sealtest Ice Cream, 371 Western Avenue**

In a continuation of our summertime Then and Now series, here is a 1964 photograph from the historical society’s Mike Eastman Collection showing Sealtest Foods, Inc., an ice cream manufacturer, located at 371 Western Avenue. The 1960s was a period of tremendous growth and change in western South Portland, under the direction of then City Manager, Bernal Allen. Within just a few years of this photograph, Western Avenue had become a major industrial corridor with many large businesses relocating and opening in South Portland including Sealtest Foods, Circus Time Potato Chips, the Coca Cola bottling plant, Fairchild Semiconductor, Portland News Co., and Klik Industries.

The Sealtest Foods plant later became the dairy group of Kraft, Inc. The site is now home to Cabot House, distinctive home furnishings.

**07-20-12 Then and Now – Cottage Road Pharmacy, 380 Cottage Road**

In last week’s column, we looked at the “new” Prescott Pharmacy building that had been built at 367 Cottage Road around 1966. Our thanks again to Diane Rollins for sending along this additional early photo of her grandfather and uncle’s earlier pharmacy building at 380 Cottage Road. The Cottage Road Pharmacy, as it was officially known, was first owned and operated by John Cassidy from the early 1930s into the 1950s. Locals all referred to
the pharmacy as “Cassidy’s” during that time and it was a popular spot with its candy counter and soda fountain. Diane Rollins’ grandfather, Frederick C. Prescott, and her uncle, Gordon A. Prescott, took over the Cottage Road Pharmacy in the mid-1950s.

In the photo taken last week, we can see that same storefront that is now occupied by Trademark, Inc., a full-service residential contractor specializing in custom home building.

07-13-12 Then and Now – Prescott’s Pharmacy, 367 Cottage Road

Our thanks to Diane Rollins for sharing some information on her family’s pharmacy in South Portland. Diane’s grandfather, Frederick C. Prescott, and her uncle, Gordon A. Prescott, were both registered pharmacists and took over operation of the Cottage Road Pharmacy from the Cassidy’s around 1957. The Cottage Road Pharmacy was located at 380 Cottage Road. Nine years later, around 1966, Fred and Gordon Prescott moved their pharmacy into a new building across the street at 367 Cottage Road. According to a news article at the time, the new pharmacy building essentially doubled the floor space of the business, increased the size of the soda fountain, allowed for a larger product line, had wall-to-wall carpeting, and offered more parking for customers.

Shown in the older photograph is the pharmacy on the corner of Fairlawn Avenue at the time of its grand opening. The current-day photo taken last week shows that the roof line has changed, along with dormers and new window openings in the masonry building.

06-29-12 South Portland’s 4th of July Celebration at Bug Light Park
Come join the fun at Bug Light Park where the South Portland Historical Society will host the annual **Fourth of July South Portland next Wednesday**.

The museum will open at 10am with free admission. A fundraiser barbecue will start at 11am and be available throughout the day serving hot dogs, hamburgers, sausage sandwiches and more, all at reasonable prices; proceeds from the barbecue benefit the museum.

From 11am until noon, we will enjoy live music, played by Rob Schreiber’s jazz band, Standard Issue, from the front porch of the museum. Standard Issue offers classic jazz from the Great American Songbook with Colleen Clark on Vocals, Emmett Harrity on Piano, Nick Merriam on Acoustic Bass and Rob Schreiber on Drums. This will be their South Portland CD release party for their debut recording. $1 of the sale of each CD will go to the South Portland Music Boosters – a not-for-profit that promotes music programs in grades 4-12 in the South Portland public schools.

Of course, the highlight of South Portland’s 4th of July is the lively reading of the Declaration of Independence at 12 noon by our own Benjamin Franklin. Mr. Franklin, played by Society member John Kierstead, has never disappointed in his annual appearance. His fiery reading of the document proclaiming America’s independence is a tremendous way to get into the spirit of the holiday.

Afternoon activities for kids will include old-fashioned games at 1:30, followed by Lobster Lore, an educational program sponsored by Weathervane Seafoods, at 2pm.

Celebrate our nation’s birthday with a picnic and games at the park, watch the kite flying (or fly your own) and take in the spectacular views of Casco Bay. Don’t forget to stay for the fireworks!

**06-22-12 T-Ledge Stables included in horse exhibit**

One of the exhibits we’ve expanded at the museum this season covers horse racing and riding in South Portland. Most people who have an appreciation for South Portland history are well aware of the Rigby Park trotting park that was in operation near Cash Corner in the 1890s. We have also covered the Island Trotting Park (also known as Baldwin’s Race Track) that operated in the Ligonia neighborhood of South Portland in the 1850s; to envision where that race track was located, think of where the Sprague Energy oil storage tanks are being painted today.

While these two trotting parks certainly are a very interesting part of our community’s history, they existed more than 100 years ago so no one is left who would remember them. In contrast, our new addition to the horse exhibit, T-Ledge Stables, is much more nostalgic. The riding stable, owned and
operated by Nell Barnes “N.B.” Knorr, was in operation from 1938 right through the 1970s. We have already seen many local people coming through the museum who remember it well. T-Ledge Stables was the fall-through-spring location of the stable on Highland Avenue; in the summer, N.B. would have the horses sent, two-by-two, in a horse trailer to Orr’s Island where she operated the T-Ledge Camp for girls.

New photographs were added to the exhibit this week, thanks to a donation from Janet Dougherty Romano. If you have photos of T-Ledge to share, as well, we would love to hear from you! The historical society’s museum at Bug Light Park is open every day from 10am to 4pm; there is no charge for admission. To reach the museum, call 767-7299 or visit http://www.sphistory.org/ for more information.

06-15-12 Civil War event at museum on Saturday, June 16

The Cushing’s Point Museum at Bug Light Park will be the host to a fun afternoon event this Saturday, June 16 at 2pm. Visitors will be treated to a visit and talk with retired First Sergeant Frederick MacBride. MacBride served for the Union in the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery regiment during the American Civil War. MacBride will be played by historical society member, John Kierstead, who has been a Civil War re-enactor for many years. Kierstead is a wealth of knowledge on the Civil War period. He will talk about the hardships that Civil War soldiers had to endure on and off the battlefield, as well as the way life was for average citizens in 1860s America.

With his incredible attention to detail, Kierstead is well-known in South Portland for his highly-accurate portrayals of key historic figures. For many years, he has brought Winston Churchill alive for Memorial Day Parades and other events; he also portrays Benjamin Franklin at South Portland’s annual 4th of July Celebration at Bug Light Park, enthralling the public with his lively readings of the Declaration of Independence.

This is a free event, open to the public. To reach the museum, take Broadway east to the ocean, turn left onto Breakwater Drive, then right on Madison Street that leads right into the park. For more information, call 767-7299.

06-08-12 Historical Society seeks sponsors to republish history of Cape Elizabeth and South Portland

South Portland Historical Society is undergoing another preservation project, of sorts. It will be republishing the William B. Jordan, Jr. book that is looked to by many as the most complete and authoritative record of South Portland and Cape Elizabeth history ever published. Mr. Jordan, the retired history professor and noted Maine historian, gifted the ownership and copyright of his book to the Society in 2010.

Originally published in 1965 under the title, A History of Cape Elizabeth, Maine, the book will be republished by the Society with an additional subtitle, “and South Portland, Maine, prior to 1895”. The Society’s hope is that the subtitle will draw the attention of many people in the local community who may not have realized that South Portland and Cape Elizabeth were formerly joined together as one town. Indeed, South Portland and Cape Elizabeth share many ties today which are a result of our common and shared history.
Book sponsors are currently being sought to assist the historical society with the costs of republishing. Each sponsor will have their name included on a special Acknowledgement page within the book, and will also receive a copy of the book upon its publication, expected in September 2012. If you would like to help the Society with this project, please mail your check for $100 to: South Portland Historical Society, 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland, ME 04106. Please note on your check, or on a separate page, how you would like your name to appear in the book. For more information, call 767-7299.

**06-01-12 Summer in Maine Auction opens on Sunday**

Whether you’re enjoying a relaxing lakeside vacation, ocean breezes on a windjammer sail, or dining out in one of Maine’s terrific restaurants – that’s what summer in Maine is all about. The South Portland Historical Society is very excited that its signature fundraiser is here again. The Summer in Maine Auction has become the premier online auction featuring all the best that Maine has to offer. All items up for bid have been donated by the service providers, allowing all auction proceeds to go directly to benefit the historical society and its museum at Bug Light Park.

On Sunday, June 3rd, the auction will go live and will run through June 9th. Auction-goers will be able to simply click the bid button to place a bid. Anyone spending time here in Maine in the summertime will be able to find great places to stay, excellent restaurants, cruises all along Maine’s coast, museums, outdoor activities and more. You can bid on a five day vacation stay in a lakeside home, tickets for a Casco Bay cruise and tour of Fort Scammel on House Island, or a getaway at the Sebasco Harbor Resort with plenty of golfing. A sampling of other donors include the Downeast Duck, Amtrak Downeaster, Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, Portland Discovery, Downeast Windjammer Cruises, Maine Historical Society, Maine State Music Theater, Village by the Sea, Casco Bay Lines, Courtyard by Marriott, the McKernan Center, and Scratch Bakery. There are auction items in all price ranges up for bid.

Now that the donors have generously given these great vacation items, the fundraiser is now in the hands of auction goers. Bid early ~ and bid high! FMI on the auction, visit the website or call us with questions at 767-7299. Our thanks to the community for your continuing support of our historical society.

**05-25-12 Memorial Day observances**

Memorial Day weekend is here – the weekend leading up to Memorial Day when we honor and remember those soldiers and sailors who have served and died for our country and our freedoms. Our thanks goes out to the VFW Post 832, the American Legion Post 35, and the many volunteers who will spread out across the city on Saturday to decorate the graves of our service men and women. If you would like to help with that effort, volunteers will be meeting at the VFW on Peary Terrace at 9am on Saturday – all volunteers are welcome. As we mow our lawns, prepare our gardens for the season, and fire up the barbecues to spend time with family and friends, let us all remember to be grateful to all of those who have fought and died to protect our country and its citizens.

One of the long-standing traditions in South Portland has been the annual Memorial Day parade. This year’s parade will start at 10:30am sharp, stepping off from the Southern Maine Community College campus, heading down Broadway, crossing Cottage Road and ending up at the new Veteran’s Memorial Monument (near Pratt Abbott). There will be a short ceremony there after the parade.

The accompanying photograph shows the Memorial Day parade sometime in the 1950s. Motorcycle officers George McCubrey and Bud McGrath are shown leading the way. The gas station in the photo was at the corner of Broadway and Ocean Street; that building later became home to Angelone’s Pizza.
for many decades. That corner is now the site of the new Bath Savings branch. Our historical society is actively seeking photographs related to the South Portland Police Department and its history. If you have any SPPD-related photographs or memorabilia to share, please call the Society at 767-7299.

05-18-12 Kite Festival fun at Bug Light Park ~ and Civil War program

Bug Light Park will be the setting this Saturday, May 19, for an incredible display of fun and fanciful kites. The Bug Light Kite Festival, brought to you by the South Portland Historical Society and members of the NorEasters Kite Club and Kites Over New England, is a free family-friendly event that will start at 11am and run through the afternoon.

The museum in the park will open at 10am with no admission charges, and then the popular Portland bluegrass band, Tricky Britches, will play from the museum front porch at 11am. A fundraiser barbecue will be available starting at 11am with hot dogs, hamburgers, sausage sandwiches and more; proceeds to benefit the museum. Throughout the day, members of the two kite clubs will display their own kites, offer boi racing and a candy drop for kids, and provide help to anyone wishing to learn how to fly their own kite. A wide selection of kites is available for sale in the museum gift shop. Bug Light will be open to the public during the festival, as well, giving a rare chance to see the inside of the lighthouse, thanks to volunteers from the South Portland/Cape Elizabeth Rotary Club.

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Portland Historical Society would like to thank several local businesses who have sponsored this year’s kite festival, including Saco & Biddeford Savings Institution, Cookie Jar Bakery, Northcenter Foodservice, Micucci Wholesale Foods, Eddie’s Variety, Blue Mango Veggie Burgers, and media sponsors Y100.9 FM and mainetoday.com.

Next week, on Wednesday, May 23rd, the South Portland Historical Society will have its annual meeting at 6:30pm at the South Portland Community Center. A brief business meeting will be followed by a lecture and slide show, “Civil War Photographs: An Illustrated Discussion of Maine’s Soldiers and Veterans” by Earle Shettleworth. Shettleworth is the State Historian and also Director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. In recognition of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War, Shettleworth will talk about the major role that Maine played in the war, using historic photographs of people, places and events. Admission to the lecture is free for current members of the South Portland Historical Society; non-members may attend with a $10 donation. FMI, call the Society at 767-7299.

05-11-12 Carve your name in history

The South Portland Historical Society’s museum at Bug Light Park has been evolving over the last few years and an ongoing fundraiser, the Engraved Brick Program, has helped the Society raise important funding for its museum operations. The engraved brick walkway was initially installed in 2010 and has been an attractive and meaningful addition to the museum grounds. A walk along the path reveals many names of current generous families who have supported the museum effort, as well as many memorial bricks dedicated to the many wonderful people who have come before us.

Bricks are still available for engraving and installation with funds continuing to support the efforts of the historical society and its museum. You can purchase a brick to
have your own name included in this South Portland walkway of history, or you can have a brick engraved in memory of a loved one. Bricks may also be purchased and engraved in honor of someone special.

A standard sized 4x8 brick is only $150 and includes three lines of engraving with 18 characters per line, including spaces. A larger 8x8 paver is also available with six lines of engraving for $250. To purchase a brick, you can mail or drop off a check to the South Portland Historical Society at 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland, ME 04106, or to use a credit card, either drop by during the museum open hours (10-4, daily) or go online to www.sphistory.org. A brick engraving form is available at the museum or may be downloaded from the website. For more information, call the museum at 767-7299.

Upcoming event: the Bug Light Kite Festival will be held on Saturday, May 19th, from 11am to 4pm at Bug Light Park. To reach the park, take Broadway east to the ocean, turn left onto Breakwater Drive, then turn right onto Madison Street that leads into the park.

05-04-12 Thornton Heights once home to Portland Country Club

As the South Portland Historical Society reopens its museum at Bug Light Park for the season on May 7, one of the featured exhibits will be the Thornton Heights neighborhood in western South Portland. Some may not know this interesting piece of Thornton Heights history, but an 18-hole golf course covered much of what has become residential streets and homes.

Portland Country Club actually originated in 1895 under the name Portland Golf Club, using a 12-hole golf course set up near Fort Preble. In 1897, the club rented the "Thornton Farm" in Thornton Heights and set up a golf course there. The club then purchased the land in 1898 and had the two-story clubhouse built.

After almost a decade, the club had grown to a point where it needed a new clubhouse, so they built a new building in 1907 on a site that is close to where St. John's Church was later erected. This was right on the trolley line and was a grand building indeed. Unfortunately, the building was destroyed by fire in 1913, which led to the club’s decision to move to a new location, in Falmouth Foreside, in 1915.

Since many homes in Thornton Heights have been built on the site of the golf course, it is no surprise that we occasionally hear of residents digging up golf balls in their gardens.

Our thanks to the following business sponsors of our 2012 Thornton Heights exhibit: Casco Bay Steel Structures, Flynn & Company Real Estate, Higgins Carpet One, and Town & Country Federal Credit Union. Starting May 7, the museum will be open every day from 10-4, through October, with no admission charges thanks in part to the generous support of these local businesses. FMI, call the museum at 767-7299.
04-27-12 Fish Houses at Fisherman’s Point

The old fishing shacks at Fisherman’s Point are a landmark in South Portland. Although they have not been in use for many years, they act as a physical reminder of the Willard neighborhood’s history as a fishing community. Over the years, we have received many questions about them at the historical society, but unfortunately, there is little documented evidence of who built, owned and used the shacks.

We received some feedback from one of the granddaughters of a fisherman who used one of the shacks. Mary Jane Campbell shared this information: “My grandfather’s name was Arthur Bolton…My mother was the oldest child born in 1927 and “Pop”, as we called him, had the shack around then as far as I know. There was also a large shack there, it would have been the first on the right as you walk out, that belonged to John Gavett. It was washed out in a hurricane in the ’70s. I also remember the huge breakwater that used to protect the beach…My grandfather used to build his lobster boats in his back yard and tow them to the beach with the help of his best friend Billy Fielding who lived in a big barn on Willow Street near the bath house.”

We would love to receive more stories about the fishermen who used the fishing shacks at Willard Beach and we would especially love to find any documentation related to the building and/or ownership of the fish houses. Please contact the Society at sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com or at 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland, ME 04106, if you have any information to share.

Note to readers: The Cushing’s Point Museum at Bug Light Park will have its official season opening on Monday, May 7th, but the museum will also open sporadically during the first week of May as new volunteers come in to train, and we expect to open the weekend of May 5th and 6th. Watch for the open flag. If you are interested in volunteering at the museum this year, please call us at 767-7299.

04-20-12 Lecture: Preserving and Organizing Your Digital Photographs

Have you been storing your photographs on your computer hard drive, CDs, thumb drives, or on the “cloud”? Do you ever search through file after file, trying to find that favorite photo? On Thursday, April 26, at 6:30pm, South Portland Historical Society will be offering a lecture at the South Portland Community Center, “Preserving and Organizing Your Digital Photographs,” presented by David Mishkin and Kathy DiPhilippo.

David Mishkin, president of the historical society, is also a professional specializing in historic photograph preservation and restoration. He will discuss preservation issues related to photography.
in this digital age and will help participants better understand proper preservation techniques to make sure their family photographs will survive for future generations. Kathy DiPhilippo, the Society’s executive director, has undertaken major digitizing projects while caring for the Society’s extensive collection of historic photographs. She will discuss ideas and tips for saving large numbers of photographs so that you can easily back-up, move and find the photos that you care about.

Admission to the lecture is free for current members of the South Portland Historical Society; non-members may attend with a $10 donation. FMI, call the Society at 767-7299.

03-30-12 The Origins of South Portland High School

It’s hard to imagine a time with no high school and yet, in the mid-1800s, children were enrolled together in a neighborhood school all the way through “graduation.” Of course, many students used to graduate at the end of the 8th grade year and go to work on the family farm or in the family business. Starting a public high school was not viewed by everyone as a positive move; the argument against having a separate high school was that the top level students were seen as role models for the younger children, so the fear was that starting a high school would be a detriment to the school system.

Despite these fears that were out there, when a grant program was developed by the state legislature in 1873 to encourage communities to start their own free high schools, the people of our community (which was called Cape Elizabeth at that time) decided to take advantage of the grant money available. The new Cape Elizabeth High School started in the fall of 1874. With no specific high school building available, the first two terms were held in temporary facilities – first at the Turner’s Island [Pleasantdale] school building, then moved to the Point Village [Willard] school building. Meanwhile, the town completed construction of its new Town Hall building at the corner of Ocean and Sawyer Streets in late 1874 [where Hamlin School now sits], and it was decided in March 1875 to outfit the 2nd floor of the Town Hall for use by the high school; the high school finished out its 1874/75 school year in this new school facility.

Although 98 students enrolled in the 1874/75 school year, only four students had progressed enough to graduate by the end of the school year in 1877. Those first four graduates are documented in an exhibit at the South Portland Historical Society’s museum. One of those four graduates was Edward C. Reynolds who would later become a judge, served as a state senator, and was also South Portland’s first mayor. Reynolds also wrote and published a book in 1892 documenting the history of the high school.

When the current-day Town of Cape Elizabeth broke off in 1895, our community changed its name to South Portland and thus the high school name was also changed to South Portland High School. Our high school remained in that Town Hall building until the building burned down in 1921. Classes met at the Broadway (Henley) School while a new high school was built at the corner of Broadway and Ocean Street. The new South Portland High School building was an impressive structure and considered one of the finest in the country when it opened in 1924. The high school would later move to Highland Avenue in 1960 when it was decided to have the high school and junior high school facilities.

03-23-12 The Caper Takeout in Knightville
This is a follow-up to a story we ran on December 16 about the clam takeout stand that used to be located on Ocean Street, adjacent to the Million Dollar Bridge. We didn’t have much information to go on except that residents have remembered the clam shack; there is no listing for this business in any directory we could find. We are so pleased that the story reached the family that used to run this business, although they now live in other states.

Arthur Albert Emmons had owned an IGA store in Kittery before moving to South Portland in 1952 with his wife, Rita, and their children. They purchased their home at 55 Hillside Avenue and Arthur started The Caper in 1953. According to his daughter, Leanne, “He and Mom thought the old gas station on the right side of the bridge as you entered Knightville would be a good location because it was the only route from Portland to South Portland and the Cape, so there was good traffic.” She remembered him working long hours in the business and her mother going over to help clean at times.

Arthur’s daughter, Glenice, also had fond memories of the short-lived business. “Dad worked hard to turn the interior space into a ‘to go’ restaurant. I remember a huge stainless steel hood over the fryers, a tall front counter, the smell of clams frying and the frappe machines. A few other to go food items were offered such as hot dogs. Dad always loved hot dogs!

“My sister and I attended Roosevelt Elementary School during the day but on the occasions we were at The Caper, we remember climbing on the rip rap on the banks of Casco Bay at the edge of the property, looking for rats and being afraid that we might find one! The parking lot was sandy soil and crushed rock.

“Dad used to tell of actor Gary Merrill coming in to get clams occasionally. He and Bette Davis were married and lived in Cape Elizabeth at the time. Knowing Dad, he probably fell all over himself and gave Mr. Merrill anything he wanted without charge!”

Emmons closed the business partly due to low profits, but mostly due to the long hours it took to run it.

Glenice and Leanne sent along the two accompanying photos of their dad and his business. In the photo of the takeout, a sign reads: Chicken in a Basket, Pepper Steaks, Fried Clams, French Fries, Hot Dogs, Hamburgs, Pizza, Cold Drinks, Coffee and Frappes.

03-09-12 Sagadahoc Farms
The historical society has had some great connections with people calling and emailing with new information about the subjects of some of our recent columns. We will include some of that information in upcoming features, but for now we hope to ask readers again for their help in learning more about a former South Portland business: Sagadahoc Farms.

What we do know about this farm on Main Street is that it was a dairy farm located close to, and a bit overlapping, the city border with Scarborough, near the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road. The accompanying photograph was found in a 1920s scrapbook at the Society and we are so pleased to find this record of the look of the farm and field; unfortunately, the person making the scrapbook cut out only the photograph and its caption, so we don’t have an exact date and there is no indication of which newspaper the photo ran in. The caption does identify the location as South Portland and also indicates that the farm was the site for the Annual Field Day of the Maine Holstein Breeders Association.

If any reader has knowledge of this farm, or anything related to it such as photographs, invoices, or any other materials, please contact the Society at 767-7299 or sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com.

When you think of trolley cars today, most people’s thoughts immediately turn to San Francisco and its iconic trolley cars running up and down the hilly streets. In South Portland, the age of trolleys was finite – starting with the first trolley car run in 1895 and ending with the final run in July of 1940. The memories created for residents of that time, however, live on to this day. I have often talked with older residents who remember fondly the open trolley cars in the summer – riding along and enjoying the breeze. Our Window on the Past this week looks on trolleys in various locations around the city.

In this 1935 image, we get a rare glimpse of a neighborhood from the past. Trolley No. 201 is sitting on the turnout on lower Pickett Street to allow No. 504 to pass. In the background we can see some of the Cushing’s Point area houses that were removed during World War II to make room for the shipyard.

Here is an open air trolley, No. 271, shown on track laid behind the Knightville car barn (now home to the Snow Squall Restaurant). The trolley tracks were detoured temporarily behind the car barn in 1915-1916 while the Million Dollar Bridge was under construction.
Heavy snows in the winter did not stop trolley service. In this circa 1916 photo, we see Trolley Plow No. 1 and a large crew of men from the electric railroad who were out clearing the tracks on Meeting House Hill. Mount Pleasant Cemetery is visible in the background.

Many people don’t realize that the trolleys used to run down Willard Street. Pictured is trolley No. 152 waiting to pick up passengers at the end of the street. Riders could enjoy a sunny day at Willard Beach and then take the open air trolley home.

02-24-12 The Marelatus Club

Looking at all of the residential homes in Loveitt’s Field today, it is hard to imagine the neighborhood’s early life as a summer vacation destination. Other than a few homes dotting the landscape, the area didn’t really come to life until the 1890s. Trolley service came to South Portland in 1895 creating an easy and relatively inexpensive way for travelers in Portland to continue on across the bridge and reach this beautiful oceanside destination. Summer cottage construction peaked in 1895 and 1896, especially with the opening of the new Willard Beach Casino and Charles Willard’s restaurant and dance pavilion at the end of Willard Street.

Loveitt’s Field was a seasonal community at that time. Most residents of the cottages would arrive in May or June and leave in September after boarding up their cottages. Reaching these homes in winter would have involved a hike through snow drifts as the city did not clear the roads to the cottages. Also inhabiting this area during the summer were vacationers staying at multiple hotels and boarding houses; many hotel guests were typically long-term guests, checking in early in the season and staying all summer. Some of the hotels included the Cloyester Hotel near the water, the Grand View on Preble Street, and the Willard Haven and New Willard hotels on Willard Beach.

The Marelatus Club was similar to a neighborhood association, and very active in the entertainment and social life of the cottage residents. The name Marelatus was derived from the Latin words, mare (sea) and latus (side). One very interesting account of the Marelatus Club is contained in a college paper written by Sally Newell in 1979 (a copy of her paper is on file at the historical society). In her paper, Newell indicates that the Marelatus Club building at 12 Pond Road, shown here, was built in 1909 and
razed in 1941. Over its history, the Marelatus Club served as the “community center” for the neighborhood, organizing dances, barbecues and other fun activities which provided entertainment for residents.

The South Portland Historical Society is always seeking information and documentation of our community’s history. If you have any photographs or information about the Marelatus Club, we would love to hear from you. The Society can be reached by phone at 767-7299, by email at sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com, or by mail at 55 Bug Light Park, South Portland ME 04106.

02-17-12 Tarbucket Nights

I have long sought out people who recall “Tarbucket Nights” – celebrated on George Washington’s Birthday throughout much of the country – so I was thrilled to receive this recollection from one of the historical society’s docents, Robert Bent. Over the years, I have learned that groups of teens across South Portland, in virtually every neighborhood in our community, celebrated Washington’s Birthday in a similar fashion. Following is an excerpt from Bob’s recollection of Tarbucket Nights in his neighborhood, in his own words:

A BOY’S REMEMBRANCE OF WASHINGTON’S BIRTHDAY

Back in the days when Washington’s Birthday was celebrated on February 22, the day was important to we youngsters, and especially in the South Portland neighborhood where we lived. The importance of the day, coming as it did amid our winter break, was heralded by the collection of discarded Christmas trees and wreaths in the days before the holiday by all of we kids. There was no town collection then, and all we had to do was ring the doorbell and politely ask if we could take away their trees. The answer, of course, was always positive. We would drag the trees to the backyard of my good friend across the street and pile them up until the entire yard was covered in a mound of faded greenery. We would scour the neighborhood, not wanting to miss a single tree.

February 22 was the big day, when we turned to and began to transfer our sizeable collection over to a vacant lot on Everett Avenue, at the top of the street. We toiled all day as we added tree after tree to the pile, the tallest among us vying to see who would get to plant the last evergreen on the top. It was pretty impressive, and we all took pride in its towering size, as we stood back and surveyed the results of our efforts. What a bonfire that was going to make! They might even see it as far away as Portland!

The rest of the day was spent in tweaking the pile to make it as perfect as we could, and stuffing key places among the boughs with crumpled newspapers to aid the initial ignition. Then, it was home to supper, and to await the magic hour. Anticipation was building!

After supper, folks began to gather around our majestic (to us) mountain. It seemed that everyone knew about this neighborhood tradition, and a good size crowd was always present. At the appointed hour, we, being prudent, “allowed” our dads to do the honors of lighting off the crumpled newspapers. Soon the fire was going in earnest, and we all stood back in awe and excitement. It was the best bonfire ever!

Of course, this happened in the 1930’s before World War II. The Great Depression was still upon us, and life, good and bad, was much simpler then, I suppose. But what strikes me today as I look back, that this tradition was a normal occurrence. Nobody objected, no permits had to be gotten, no police were there, not even a fire truck, although the Willard Hose Company was just down Pillsbury Street. We all stayed to see the bonfire’s end and snow was thrown on any remaining embers before we left, good citizens all. We liked to think George would have approved of our tribute!

02-10-12 Shipyard March 1942
This week’s historic photograph comes from the National Archives. The aerial image was taken in March 1942 and provides an excellent view of ships in production at the Todd-Bath Iron Shipbuilding Corporation in South Portland, also known as the East Yard. This area is now home to Port Harbor Marine and the Breakwater and Spring Point Marinas. The seven ship basins clearly contain ships in varying stages of completion and an additional three ships are tied up at the outfitting pier. On the left side of the photo, we can see Fort Preble and in the lower left corner, Spring Point Ledge Light in the water (the breakwater had not yet been constructed).

02-03-12 Historical Society receives grants for work at museum

The South Portland Historical Society will be busy at its museum this spring, thanks to generous funding by multiple donors. The Society recently received a $12,000 grant from the Davis Family Foundation, as well as a $5,000 gift from Marshall and Ruth-Anne Gibson. Additionally, two grants were received through the Maine Community Foundation: $2,500 from the Rines/Thompson Fund and $1,000 from the Edward H. Daveis Benevolent Fund.

Some of the projects that have been funded include a renovation of the front entry of the museum, as well as replacement of floor coverings in all public areas of the building. Additionally, the Society will be replacing windows and making repairs to the cupola and roof to tighten up the building envelope. These repairs will help to create a more stable environment for preservation of collections in the museum archives. Completion funding for the cupola project will come in the form of a $5,000 grant from the Maine State Archives.

The Society has also created its first internship program. Elizabeth Chenevert, a senior at the University of Southern Maine, majoring in American History, will be cataloguing Society collections this winter and spring. Cataloguing will be done with the Past Perfect museum software which was acquired by the Society last fall through grant funding by the NHPRC and New Century Community Program, through the Maine State Archives.

01-27-12 Jensen Dairy Farm

Most residents would have no idea that, in a field alongside Broadway, cows used to graze with a great view of the Portland waterfront. I was so pleased to talk with Henrietta Larou and Belle Graney last week when this farm came up in conversation. Both sisters remembered the small dairy farm located at 343 Broadway, near Margaret Street, as well as its owners, Julius and Estrid Jensen. Belle and Henrietta remember seeing four cows there as they walked home from high school each day (when the high school used to be in the now-Mahoney building on the corner of Broadway and Ocean).

Julius and Estrid Jensen had a small field next to their house where their four cows would graze away on a sunny afternoon. Looking through the old Portland directories, we find Julius and Esther first listed as living in the house in 1919, back when Julius was listed only as a “laborer.” Starting in 1921, though, and running all the way through 1940, the couple listed themselves as a dairy. It’s hard to tell what happened when the shipyard
activities of World War II broke out in South Portland in 1941, but it does appear that the Jensens gave up their cows and dairy business – which would make sense as trains would have been carrying steel and supplies past the house every day. Julius Jensen took on a job as the janitor at Reynolds School for a few years and then worked as an inspector at Maine Steel in Ferry Village in the latter half of the war.

Belle and Henrietta remember that Estrid Jensen was a member of the Peoples Church and helped with putting on the church’s suppers. After Julius died in 1948, Estrid continued living in the house and worked at Anderson’s Pharmacy across the street. We would love to learn more about the Jensens and their dairy farm and we hope some residents might remember them. If you remember the Jensens or if your family got their milk from them, we hope that you will contact the South Portland Historical Society at 767-7299 or sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com and share your memories.

**01-13-12 Historical Society seeks local drug store-related items**

In the not-so-distant past, neighborhood centers would often feature a mom-and-pop pharmacy or drug store. These locally-owned and managed stores were great places for residents to shop, hang out and catch up on local news, talk with their friends and neighbors, and at many of the drug stores, sit down to enjoy a drink at the soda fountain.

South Portland’s neighborhoods resembled those across America. Older residents can quickly name all the local hangouts in their neighborhoods. In Knightville, you could go to Johnson’s Pharmacy or the Legion Square Pharmacy. Pleasantdale was home to Ward’s Drug Store, Meeting House Hill had Prescott’s Pharmacy, and Dow’s Drug Store in Ferry Village was a very popular spot. Every neighborhood had one; the name and pharmacist might be different depending on which year it was, but this common thread was found throughout our neighborhoods.

In South Portland, we can clearly see the beginning of the end of the local store era in 1955 when the Mill Creek Shopping Center opened and started marketing the benefits of getting in your car, leaving your neighborhood, and enjoying the one-stop shopping and convenience of a “mall.” A few decades later in the 1970s after the Maine Mall had opened and continued to draw people away from their neighborhoods, most of the local drug stores had disappeared.

South Portland Historical Society is seeking any items related to the old South Portland drug stores. Pictured at right is a pharmacy bottle recently acquired by the historical society. This small bottle contained spirit of camphor prescribed from the George Taylor Pharmacy in Thornton Heights. According to an early druggist newsletter, this medicine was prescribed for the following use: “After getting wet will often ward off colds.” The Society has a few other pharmacy-related items such as a pill box from Ward’s Drug Store and a thermometer from Johnson’s Pharmacy, but would love to obtain additional items related to our many drug stores that once existed. If you have any items related to South Portland drug stores, we would love to hear from you! Please contact the society at 767-7299 or email at sphistoricalsociety@maine.rr.com.