



Holt House News

Volume 21, No. 1

Spring 2019

Newsletter of the Blue Hill Historical Society

bluehillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

“Roots and Branches” *An Exhibit Honoring Mary Ellen Chase*

Opening Saturday, July 27th

The roots of the Chase family reach back into the earliest days of Blue Hill. Mary Ellen Chase is a product of her family history, which provided both the inspiration for her many books and the lens through which she saw her world. Those books, more than 30 in number, are the branches that reach out and touch us today.

Mary Ellen Chase was born in 1887, the second of eight children of Edward Everett Chase and Edith Mabel Lord. Both of her parents were well educated. After grammar school, her father attended the Classical Institute and Bowdoin College. He was then qualified to practice law. He maintained a law office in Ellsworth. Recently, the Blue Hill Historical Society received a collection of his legal papers that were

discovered in the basement of the Pendleton House. This indicated that he may also have had an office in Blue Hill.



Her mother graduated from the Blue Hill Academy, excelling in Latin, which she then taught at the Academy prior to her marriage.

In her book, “A Goodly Heritage”, Mary Ellen Chase tells the story of her paternal grandfather, Melatiah Kimball Chase, a sea captain, who began his career at sea as the only survivor of a shipwreck off the coast of Ireland. After his narrow escape, he returned home and married Eliza Ann Wescott. Eliza had trained as a midwife, then travelled to Bangor, where she studied to become a seamstress. Eliza sailed with her husband for fourteen years, making numerous voyages and visiting ports around the world.

The “Roots” of the exhibit will include a large framed portrait of Captain Melatiah Kimball Chase, gift of Wallace W. Hinckley. A sea captain’s liquor chest, believed to have been used by Capt. Chase, along with selected pieces of Rose Medallion china, collected by Eliza Ann Wescott on her many travels, also will be featured in the exhibit. We thank Janet Preston and family for donating the chest and the china.

The “Branches” portion of the exhibit will include a selection of the books Mary Ellen Chase wrote and selected excerpts. Other items in the Historical Society collection related to the Chase family will be noted throughout the Holt House. **Please join us for this very special view of Blue Hill History, through the eyes of one of its most famous authors.**

Our Society

President's Letter

Winter at the Holt House is always a quiet time, but the work of the Board continues. In our Fall newsletter, we suggested that capacity building will define our work for the foreseeable future. We have taken the first step toward this goal by creating several committees to both define the work needed and identify the "point persons" responsible.

Committees are as follows: Buildings and Grounds, Collections, Budget and Fundraising, Programs and Education, and Publicity and Publications.

Board members chair these working committees, but we welcome other people interested in history to join a committee to help carry out any specific project. If you are interested, please send a note to us at bluehillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

We are planning to hire part-time summer staff again this year. We found that having staff present at the House last summer made a big difference!

There will be one new exhibit this summer, focusing on Mary Ellen Chase and her family. (See Page One.) The Program Committee has planned four lectures for our 2019 Summer season (See Page 6.) Our Touring through Time program the last weekend of July includes a History Tour.

Look for news of these events in the local papers and of course, on our improved website, www.BlueHillHistory.org as well as our Facebook page.

See you at the Holt House this summer!

Anna Roelofs

Officers:

President: Anna Roelofs

Vice President and Membership: Win Turner

Treasurer: Lesley Litwiller

Recording Secretary: Diana Page

Curator: Ann Durgin

Board Members:

Gregory Bush

Brandi Candage

Brittany Courtot

Jim Dow

Duncan Hamilton

Kat Hudson

Jean McKillop

Camilla Saly-Monzingo

Rick Sawyer

Officers and Board Members are elected at our Annual Meeting which is held in October.

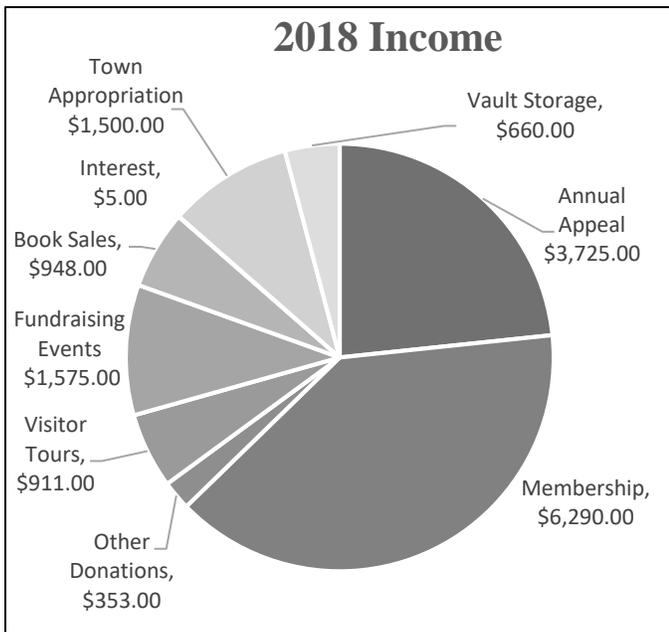
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Changing Newsletter Editor

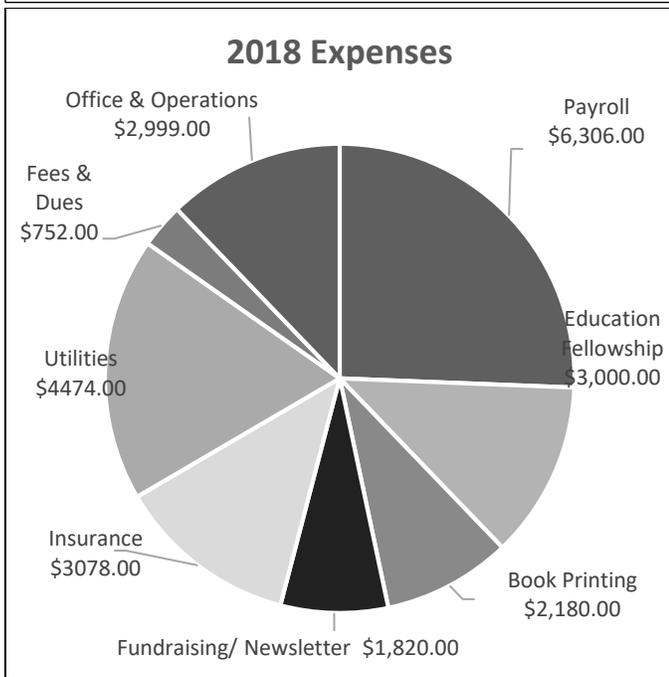
On June 1, Rick Sawyer, past President and local historian will assume the title of Newsletter Editor. His first issue will be the 2019 Fall Issue. I have enjoyed being Editor for the last few years, and look forward to contributing articles for future issues.

We always appreciate feedback on the articles and stories we publish. Thanks, Rick!

Ann Durgin



In addition, we removed \$18,300 from investments for repairs and maintenance.



As you can see, Membership is a large portion of our income. We have included a membership form for your convenience. Please send it in today.

How we work

The mission of the Historical Society has so many facets, it is difficult to keep track of everything that is going on. The President's letter described our Committee structure. All Board Directors serve on at least one committee, but we still need contributions of time and talent from our members. *Please consider how you can help us.*

Can you manage a garden? Paint a fence? Make new signs? Clean up the parking area?

Join the Building and Grounds Committee!

Would you like to give tours of the Holt House to summer visitors? Learn how to care for documents, photographs, textiles, and furniture in our collections? Enter data?

Join the Collections Committee!

Do you have experience writing grants? Planning fund-raising campaigns?

Join the Budget and Fundraising Committee!

Do you love to plan events – either fund-raisers or educational? Have ideas for school activities that will engage our future historians?

Join the Programs and Education Committee!

Can you write an exciting article for a local newspaper or other publication? Use social media to spread the word about our events? Research interesting Blue Hill residents and write stories for publication?

Join the Publicity and Publications Committee!

e-mail: bluehillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

The Influenza Pandemic of 100 Years Ago

Richard M. Sawyer

It is likely this year that you will hear something about the 100th anniversary of WWI and perhaps the Great Influenza or Spanish Flu of 1919. In the Blue Hill Record Book of Deaths, the first mention of “La Grippe” was on April 16th 1918 when sixty-six-year-old Augustus Parker died in Brooklin. The first mention of “Influenza” in Blue Hill is from the death of Everett Crocker, born in Millbridge, age 27, who died in Blue Hill on Oct 19, 1918. There is also mention of Chandler Hutchins, age 23, born in Penobscot who died at Camp Devens on Oct 2nd 1918.

Camp Devens was a military encampment northwest of Boston built to hold a maximum of 36,000 men. On Sept 6th 1918 the place was over-crowded with 40,000 men and it was reported in August that an epidemic of influenza “may have started among the soldiers there.” On Sept 7th a dozen men were hospitalized for meningitis. By Sept 22nd 19.6% of the entire population of the camp was sick and 75% of those were hospitalized. As you can imagine, this “explosion” was transmitted to the civilian population in no time. Dr. Roy Grist, one of the army physicians at the hospital at Camp Devens wrote:

“These men start with what appears to be an ordinary attack of LaGrippe or Influenza and when brought to the Hosp. they very rapidly develop the most vicious type of Pneumonia that has ever been seen. Two hours after admission they have the Mahogany spots over the cheek bones, and a few hours later you can begin to see the Cyanosis extending from their ears and spreading all over the face, until it is hard to distinguish the coloured men from the white.”

One in every 67 soldiers in the army died of influenza and its complications during WWI, and nearly all those deaths were in a ten-week period beginning in mid-September of 1918. It was not just the soldiers readying for WWI, who died; the pandemic killed 15 times as many civilians as military. Astonishingly, from mid-September to early December 1918, *one-half* of *all* deaths from the pandemic took place, although the influenza pandemic continued for two years. Influenza killed more people in one year than the black death in the middle ages killed in a century. It killed enough to depress the average life expectancy by more than 10 years. Today epidemiologists estimate that the influenza pandemic killed at least 40 million people worldwide. Much of the pandemic came in waves. Below is a group of recorded deaths in Blue Hill.

<i>Date of death</i>	<i>Place of Death</i>	<i>Disease or Cause of Death</i>	<i>Name of deceased</i>	<i>age</i>
Oct 2nd 1918	Camp Devens, Mass	Influenza	Chandler Hutchins	23
Oct 10th 1918	Blue Hill	Pulmonary Tuberculosis	Henry A. Parker	67
Oct 13th 1918	Brockton, Mass	Influenza Brocho-Pneumonia	Willis R. Mello	33
Oct 16th 1918	Blue Hill	Influenza	Everett Crocker	27
Oct 20th 1918	Blue Hill	Tuberculosis of Lung	Lessie S. Grindle	22
Oct 20th 1918	Blue Hill	Bronchial Pneumonia	Elizabeth Hinckley	34

(Continued on next page)

(Influenza, cont'd)

The difficulty in reading the records lies in the fact that doctors did not know what was killing people during this time and many alternate causes of death were listed. Usually influenza killed the very young and the very old, but in 1918 it killed also the robust and strong. Many died in a day or two after the first symptoms. One reason many scientists believe so many healthy people died was because of their strong immune response to the virus, leading to more damage to the internal organs, especially the lungs. This immune response in the lungs caused too much fluid which caused a lack of oxygen which led to death. One scientist 70 years after the pandemic said that the condition of the lungs was “unusual in other viral respiratory infections and is reminiscent of lesions seen following inhalation of poison gas.” But as author John M. Barry wrote “it was not poison gas, and it was not pneumonic plague, it was only influenza.”

Those most likely to die, scientists say, were pregnant women; historically influenza has been connected to miscarriages and the death of pregnant women. During the pandemic in 1918, of the pregnant women who survived influenza, 26% lost their child. This fact is evidenced in the Blue Hill records as there were 5 infant deaths attributed to “Premature Births” in the Blue Hill records between March 7th 1919 and Feb. 3rd 1920. For comparison, there were no “Premature Birth” deaths recorded in the two-year period before the pandemic (1916 to 1918) or after the pandemic (1920 to 1921.)

Much of the information for this article comes from The Great Influenza, John M. Barry, Penguin Books 2004

Touring through Time

Every year the Historical Societies and Museums of East Penobscot Bay and the Blue Hill Peninsula join forces in order to make the historical treasures of the region available to visitors on one special week-end.

The Blue Hill Historical Society will take part in the special events planned for the last weekend in July along with those of neighboring towns. The full schedule for July 27 and 28 will be advertised closer to the dates.

On Saturday, July 27, the Holt House’s Mary Ellen Chase exhibit, “Roots and Branches” will open. Refreshments will be served. The hours are 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

On Sunday, July 28, a “Magical History Tour” around the town will be offered, departing at one p.m. from the Holt House. Curious? Look for details on our website, Facebook page and the local papers.

On the Internet

The past year has seen a great expansion in the ways the Blue Hill Historical Society makes use of the internet.

We have a Facebook page! Over the summer, our interns kept a lively presence with frequent posts about local history and interesting items in the collections. We are eager to resume this activity.

We have a new e-mail address: bluehillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com Since we have no paid staff during the winter, there may be a delay, but we will respond to messages as quickly as possible.

We have an updated website! www.BlueHillHistory.org. Through the website, you can learn about events, sign up for membership online, purchase books, and view listings of genealogical resources we have available at Holt House.

Please be sure to visit us!

Dear Friends,

Please join us in keeping Blue Hill's rich history alive.

The Blue Hill Historical Society was established in 1902 to do just that. Now, 117 years later, this all-volunteer, non-profit community organization continues that important work.

The Society owns and maintains the historic Holt House near the center of Blue Hill village, which displays and stores a diverse collection of historic artifacts and records. It also maintains an adjacent carriage house which has a climate-controlled vault where many of the most important or fragile historical records are kept. The Society publishes newsletters, articles, and books, and organizes programs and events, that share the town's history with young and old, students and teachers, residents and visitors. The Society also maintains genealogical records and helps visitors with research.

Although volunteer-powered, the work of the Society requires money. It relies on members and friends for that necessary financial support. Please help us continue the Society's work in 2019 by making a contribution in the enclosed envelope.

Last summer, thanks to our supporters, we were able to hire student interns to help with the work, while also giving the students a valuable learning experience. Among other benefits of their assistance, we were able to keep the Holt House open to the public for extended hours. This summer, if the funding allows, we hope again to have student interns join us in the various programs that we organized to share the story of our town's fascinating history. Your gift will help make that possible.

There are many things that make Blue Hill such a special place. Its history is one of those things. Please help us preserve that history.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors

The 2019 Blue Hill Historical Society Lecture Series

“Three Musical Themes, Two Authors and the Gold Rush”

Wednesday, May 29th hosted at the Kneisel Hall concert room, sponsored in association with the Jonathan Fisher House and the Bagaduce Music Lending Library:

Blue Hill’s Music History in Three Periods: Jonathan Fisher, Franz Kneisel and Jazz

(Three speakers plus a musical performance for each period.)

Wednesday, June 19th hosted by the Blue Hill Public Library:

A Sense of Place: Rediscovering Mary Ellen Chase

University of Southern Maine Professor Emeritus **Joseph Conforti** is well known for his books and studies on New England history. He will talk about Blue Hill Author Mary Ellen Chase and how her work reflects the history of the region.

Thursday, July 11th hosted by the Blue Hill Public Library:

From Blue Hill to California, Rushing for Gold in 1849-1855

Thousands of men, and a few women, left Maine to join the California gold rush. Cultural historian and writer **Jan Eakins** will trace some who left Blue Hill, discuss their journeys west, their lives in California, and the ones who returned.

Tuesday, July 23rd hosted by the Blue Hill Public Library:

Castine, Paris & Blue Hill: Author Katharine Butler Hathaway’s Life

Cultural Historian Dr. Abby Clouse-Radigan encountered the writing of Katharine Butler Hathaway, author of “The Little Locksmith,” during her summer visits to Castine. She is currently researching the author’s biography. The historic home where Hathaway wrote her acclaimed memoir is located in Blue Hill.

Watch for more information in the local papers and at the Library!

Schedule of Events 2019

Tuesday, June 25, 6:30 pm. **Training for Summer Tour Guides (This could be you!)
At the Holt House**

Friday, July 5, 1:00 pm. **Holt House Opens for the 2019 Season**

Saturday, July 27, 11:00 **“Roots and Branches” Opens
(An Exhibit Honoring Mary Ellen Chase)**

“Touring Through Time”

Sunday, July 28 **"Magical History Tour" of Blue Hill**

Check website and facebook for updates

**Entertaining and Informative Tours of the “Old Settlers' Cemetery”
led by Brittany Courtot**

Dates for the tours to be arranged: Watch the “Weekly Packet”, Visit our Facebook page, check our website:

www.bluehillhistory.org