



# Holt House News

Volume 24, No. 1

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Newsletter of the Blue Hill Historical Society  
bluehillhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

*We look to the Future as We Preserve the Past*



On April 30<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Directors of the Blue Hill Historical Society held its first strategic planning retreat in over 5 years. This event was originally planned for 2020 but was postponed due to COVID-19. The full-day session was guided by Raney Bench of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society, and hosted by board member and business owner Duncan Hamilton at the Blue Hill Inn. The meeting focused on property maintenance, governance and community engagement.

The retreat was crucial to the Society and Holt House because we must understand how we can best serve our community while also preserving, collecting and sharing the many pieces of history we have in our collection. Our current political, cultural and economic landscape is continually changing, and as a community organization we are not only excited to work on our priorities to improve the Society's properties and collections, but also work to better understand the environment and community we live in and call home.

As a board, we hope to create a strategic plan so our organization has the ability to identify different things we want to accomplish, understand the many challenges that lie ahead, and brainstorm solutions. We would like to thank the community for their continued support.

*Maxfield Y. Rhine*

# Our People

## President's Letter

Greetings! With Memorial Day just around the corner, there is excitement in the air. As we prepare to begin the summer season we look forward to regular hours for our house tours, greeting more visitors and sharing the rich history of our town! If you are looking for an outing with your visitors, please consider a trip to the Holt House. Stay tuned for our Summer Speaker events.

*Brandi Candage, President*

We are looking forward to getting back to normal. Unless directives from the CDC change, we will be open for tours as we have in the past.

**Summer Hours –**  
**Beginning Tuesday, July 5**  
Every Tuesday 1:00 to 4:00  
Every Friday 1:00 to 4:00  
Every Saturday 11:00 – 2:00

Other times by appointment

Please come and visit the Holt House Museum, or dig a little deeper into your family history!

## Officers

**President:** Bradi Candage

**Vice-President:** Brittany Courtot

**Treasurer:** Duncan Hamilton

**Recording Secretary:** Camilla Saly-  
Monzingo

**Curator:** Ann Durgin

## Board Members

Greg Bush

Christopher Closs

Phil Norris

George Pazuniak

Max Rhine

John Warren

## **Your annual membership form is enclosed!!**

Please fill it out right away and send it in  
with your check!

Remember that you can increase your level  
of membership or make a donation in  
addition to your membership! We thank you  
for your past generosity and hope you will  
continue to support the Blue Hill Historical  
society!

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## *An Evening of Oral History*

There was a full house in the Howard Room of the Blue Hill Library on March 24th. Many people came out to hear Jerry Butler and Denny Robertson hold forth, off the cuff, on all aspects of local history. They both adhered to the Maine tradition of liberal amounts of humor interjected into the conversation. Jerry talked about the building on the corner of Pleasant and Main which currently houses Elliott Architects. The building, in the nineteen forties, belonged to the Billings family and contained the central switchboard for telephone service in Blue Hill. Jerry described how operators were stationed there 24 hours a day. To call someone you would ring up the operator and ask to be connected to them. The operators wore headsets which were wiped down with witch hazel after every use. He said that both his sisters had worked there as operators.

Denny Robertson revealed that his grandfather had also been fire chief in Blue Hill in his time. Denny described early fire-fighting equipment including a pumper wagon which was muscle-powered, three men on each side, pulling down a rail. He said it was very tiring. He mentioned a chemical wagon which used soda to build up water pressure. He went on to talk about the community out on Long Island in Blue Hill Bay in the time of his grandfather. He said that in the wintertime the bay would freeze over and people could walk over on the ice to the South Blue Hill post office. He told a funny story about two men pulling a dory across on thin ice.

After an hour, the two men took questions and were asked about a ship built by Nehemiah Hinckley that was hauled overland by oxen. Jerry knew right where to find it in the Blue Hill histories and read aloud the pertinent passages. The schooner “St. Leon” was hauled by 100 yoke of oxen over the snow in 1837 all the way from Nehemiah’s place on the Range Road to the harbor. Nehemiah, born in 1790, was the son of Nehemiah and Edith (Wood) Hinckley from the second generation of settlers in Blue Hill.

We are grateful to Denny and Jerry for sharing their memories with us. This fascinating talk was recorded by video camera and will be available indefinitely on the Blue Hill Public Library YouTube Channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arlgKAojz4g>

*Phil Norris*

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## *Changes Are Coming to the Blue Hill Hospital*

Like everyone in town, the Blue Hill Historical Society has been watching the changes taking place at the hospital. While we are sad to see the old building demolished, we understand the demands of a modern health care system. The original Blue Hill Hospital was previously the home of James B. Bettel at the turn of the 20th century. The property was purchased by Caroline A Richard in 1924, and soon thereafter was incorporated as Blue Hill Hospital.

On February 9th of 2022, the Blue Hill Planning Board awarded a site plan approval for a new \$26 million hospital building to replace the existing 100-plus year old facility. The work on the site got under way on April 5th of 2022, with expected completion in 2023.

Prior to this, members of the Blue Hill Historical Society including: President Brandi Candage, Curator Ann Durgin and Vice-President Brittany Courtot were given a tour by hospital spokeswoman Kelley Columber. During the course of this tour, it was decided that ownership of several items and artifacts from the building were going to be gifted to the Historical Society. These items include a half-moon window, a bust of Dr. Raymond Van Ness Bliss and various ephemera from the hospital's collection. In addition, several exterior shots of the hospital have been captured to document the building's architecture. Kelly visited the April Board of Directors meeting to update the entire group on the plans and to answer questions. The door is open for communication and collaboration between the two organizations going forward.

*Brittany Courtot*

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## *The Blue Hill Maritime Heritage Festival*

The Blue Hill Historical Society is co-sponsor of the annual Blue Hill Maritime Heritage Festival, being held this year 10am - 4 pm, Saturday August 13, 2022. The main exhibit area will be the Blue Hill Waterfront, but The Holt House and the adjoining Carriage House will be open to visitors, and it is anticipated that at least some activities may be scheduled on the Holt/Carriage House lawn.

The Maritime Festival celebrates Blue Hill's maritime history. Various activities will be occurring throughout the day, such as boat building demonstrations, oar carving, traditional boats on display, kiosks of organizations supporting or involved with the bay.

On the water there will be more boats, demonstrations, some offering rides. Musicians will be adding to the maritime atmosphere with sea shanties and fiddle tunes. Under the big tent, there will be a rope making machine and very popular kiddie pool. On the wharf, George Stevens Academy will be displaying the St Ayles Skiff they recently built.

MCCF will have Captain Weeds "Ask Leroy," this year to answer your questions on how lobsters get from the bottom of the bay to your plate. Also new to the Festival, Penobscot Marine Museum, Downeast Institute and their touch tank, and Maine Island Trail Association. Local artists will be rejoining us again displaying their Art in the Park.

For more info, go to the Festival website: [www.bhmhf.org](http://www.bhmhf.org)

*George Pazuniak*

# The Osgood Family of Blue Hill

by Phil Norris

The Osgoods were among the earliest white settlers in Blue Hill. Ezekial Osgood arrived in Blue Hill in 1765 with his wife Mary Barker Osgood and their twelve children. That was not an unusual number of offspring for that time. Their first son was named Ezekiel and their first daughter was named Mary. This too was not unusual.

But one wonders what drove a 53 year-old man with a dozen children to leave the relative comfort and safety of well-settled Andover, Massachusetts to start from scratch in the wilderness east of the Penobscot River. He and his family moved to a budding three year-old community of log cabins in the woods. If you knew how to use an axe there was no lack of building materials for log cabins.

The first settlers of Blue Hill all lived in the vicinity of John Roundy's tidal-powered sawmill at Blue Hill Falls. That area of town came to be known as the Tide Mill District. The sawmill figured large in the lives of the Osgoods as they cleared the trees from their homesite and planted a garden. Their log cabin likely had a floor and roof boards sawn out by Roundy and the sawmill might have been a source of employment for the young Osgood men.

Ezekiel died from an injury resulting from a fall in 1798 at the age of 86 years. His wife, Mary, lived for another twelve years and died at the age of 85. Three of their sons fought in the American Revolution. Lt. Christopher Osgood and his brother Phineas served during the siege of Boston in 1775 and their brother David was at Valley Forge in 1777. All three survived the conflict and returned to Blue Hill.

The settlers at the Tide Mill District set about clearing the land to make pasture and farmland. Many more families moved in over the next fifteen years. Sometime in the 1780s a second sawmill was established by Daniel, the fifth son, on the Mill Stream at the head of the bay. At that point the trees in the vicinity of the sawmill began to disappear making the surroundings more conducive to settlement. The village of Blue Hill was born. According to Bill Hinckley, Blue Hill historian, in 1790 there were still only a handful of houses within a mile of the mouth of the Mill Stream.

Daniel must have been a mover and a shaker. He served on various town committees and was one of the chief builders of the original town hall which was located on the east side of the Mill Stream. At some point he sold his interest in his sawmill and established a second mill about 200 yards upstream. This was a grist mill. Farmers and homesteaders would come from miles around and wait in line to have their corn, wheat, and rye ground into flour. This grist mill stayed in the Osgood family for three generations passing from Daniel to his son, Nathan, and then to his grandson, Rodney.

*(cont'd on next page)*

Ezekiel Jr. and Daniel owned land on the east side of the Mill Stream. Daniel built a log cabin there and cleared a field and took up residence with his wife, Sarah Smith. They had eleven children. In 1796 Jonathan Fisher was ordained as Blue Hill's first settled minister in a ceremony which took place there in Daniel's field. Later, Pleasant Street was laid out between the two lots – Ezekiel Jr. on the west side of Pleasant Street and Daniel on the east side.

In approximately 1800, when Daniel Osgood was 45, he built a framed house on Pleasant Street which still stands and is occupied at present by Diana Page, a member of the Blue Hill Historical Society. Daniel died on March 26, 1839 after falling into his cellar at the age of 83 years and 10 months. His widow died in 1855 at the age of 87 years.

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*Believe it or not...*

## *Over 600 Scholars were enrolled in Blue Hill Schools in 1876*

Documents tell us that there were 20 school districts in Blue Hill in 1876. Each district had its own school. Each school was located depending on the distance that a child could be expected to walk from home to the schoolhouse. Altogether, the districts were responsible for the education of over 600 scholars. A "scholar" was anyone between the ages of 4 and 21 years of age. However, many scholars did not attend school regularly, and some, not at all. Skills they would need as adults were often learned at home.

Each school district had an agent. Every year, the agent was required to provide a certified list of all the scholars in his district and an account of his official expenditures, accompanied by necessary vouchers. The documents do not tell which area of town was served by a particular district, but the scholar's surnames provide a clue. For example, District 12 served 36 scholars. There were six children with the surname Chatto, seven with the surname Duffy, eight with the surname Grindle, and two with the surname Cole. Other surnames included Closson, Anderson and Henderson. It is most likely that District 12 served scholars on Long Island.

The largest district was called "Head of the Bay" and served 114 scholars. Edward E. Chase, the son of Melatiah K. Chase and father of Mary Ellen Chase, was 15 years old. He would later become a lawyer and a judge. Carl P. (Clara) Holt and Maude M. Holt, both daughters of T.J. Napoleon Holt were also enrolled in this district.

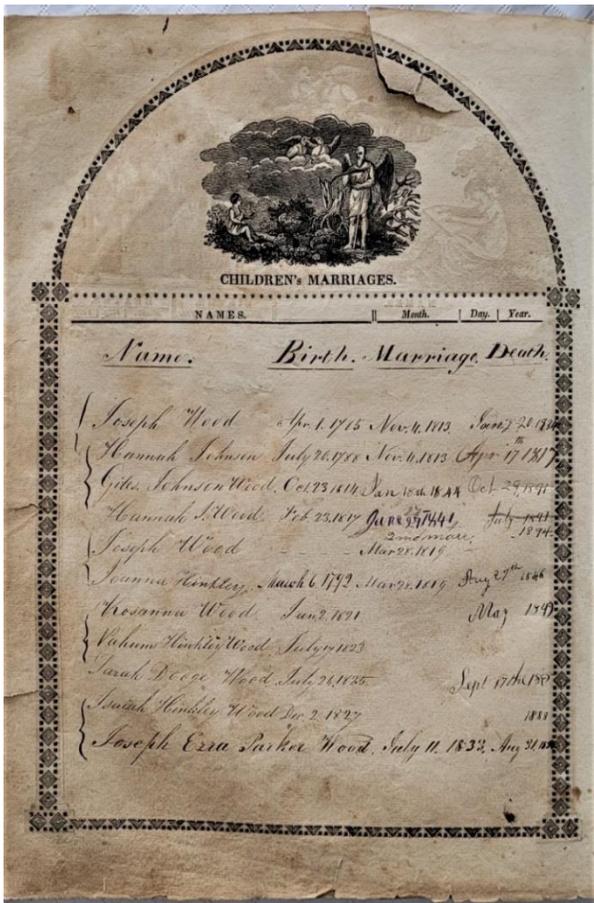
There were two schoolhouses, referred to as "upper" and "lower". The school on Pleasant Street, near the Baptist Church was probably the "upper" school. Due to its size, this was the most costly district in town. Wages and board for the teacher in the upper school totaled \$80.00 for the summer term of 10 weeks. The teacher in the lower school received \$75.00 for the summer term. The winter term spanned 12 weeks. The teacher in the upper school received \$96.00 and the teacher in the lower school received \$90.00. In addition to wages and board, \$15.25 was paid for fuel and \$41.75 for repairs and maintenance to the building.

## *The Friend / Wood Family Bible*

In the early days, the family bible was held in the highest regard. When many could not read, bible verses were memorized and could be recited easily. But the family bible was important for another reason. Between the Old and the New Testament, a number of blank pages with ornate borders were often inserted. These pages were used to record the births, marriages and deaths family members. The bible was carefully handed down from one generation to the next.

The Blue Hill Historical Society is honored to hold the bible belonging to the Friend / Wood family. When the Bible arrived, we noticed that the date of publication was 1816. Very carefully, we opened to the center of the book and were thrilled to find many entries. The page below begins with the birth of Joseph Wood a descendant of the Joseph Wood, who along with John Roundy, was the earliest settler in 1762. Another page begins with "great grandfather" John Friend and "grandfather" John Friend. This page includes their wives and children. One of the children listed is Otis Friend. His death date is given as 1862. We know this is correct because other records tell us that Otis Friend died during the Civil War.

This page and the others can be viewed on our website: [www.bluehillhistory.org](http://www.bluehillhistory.org)



The entries on this page read:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth</u>	<u>Marriage</u>	<u>Death</u>
Joseph Wood	Apr 1, 1785	Nov. 4, 1813	Jan 20, 1834
Hannah Johnson	July 26, 1788	Nov. 4, 1813	Apr 17, 1817
Giles Johnson Wood	Oct. 23, 1814	Jan 18, 1844	Oct. 29, 1891
Hannah J. Wood	Feb 23, 1817	June 27, 1841	July, 1894
Joseph Wood	-----	2 <sup>nd</sup> Marr. 28 Mar, 1819	
Joanna Hinkley	Mar 6, 1792	28 Mar, 1819	Aug. 27, 1846
Rosanna Wood	Jan. 2, 1821		May, 1849
Nahum Hinkley Wood	July 17, 1823		
Sarah Dodge Wood	July 24, 1825		Sept 17, 1865
Isaiah Hinkley Wood	Dec. 2, 1827		1888
Joseph Ezra Parker Wood	July 11, 1833		Aug 31, 18--

## Sewell Snowman – *Weekly Packet*, May 5, 2022



We hope you read the story by Val Libby in the *Weekly Packet* on May 5. In the foreground of the photo, at lower right, you can see a small tintype of Sewell in its case. He is wearing his uniform and holding the rifle that you can see on the table. Photographing a tintype in its frame is tricky.

We tried, but were not able to eliminate the glare from the camera. We are grateful to Ken Woisard, of East Blue Hill for taking this photo correctly.

We plan to add this photo, along with Sewell's canteen, rifle and bayonet to our Civil War Exhibit.

We will happily accept other tintypes of Civil War soldiers from Blue Hill, which will be added to our collection.