



# THE COLONEL'S JOURNAL

NEWS & MORE FROM THE SWAN'S ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Swan's Island: Six miles east of ordinary!



Dear wesley, Read on for this season's news and some memories. We hope you enjoy peeking into the past, near and far! And if you REALLY enjoy it...please consider giving, a little or a lot. Island history is YOUR history, and we need you to help SIHS preserve it and keep the record straight. Enjoy!

Issue #4

Fall 2022

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Portrait of our namesake, Colonel James Swan, by Gilbert Stuart, 1795. Part of the Swan Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

A copy hangs on our north wall at SIHS.

## A Message from Our President



What an amazing summer it was, and we have so many people to thank! We started a new program called the **Swan's Island History Series**. Many thanks to Kim Colbeth for her wonderful presentation on "Special Places on Swan's Island" complete with photos of her students in action exploring the hidden treasures on the Island. Thanks also to the entertaining and knowledgeable Myron "Sonny" Sprague and Dexter Lee who called themselves "Two Geezers" and shared their stories about life on the Island.

We held two of our signature "Ice Cream Socials" which always draw a crowd...this year we even had to send Gwen May to TIMS for emergency ice cream! Thank you to Gwen May, Nancy Carter, Dori LeMoine, Nancy Davis, Ann Marie Maguire, Margaret Schleiff and Dennis Kranyak for giving us a hand with those. The last social of the season was held on Labor Day weekend. Hope you made it!

Many thanks to Jennifer Helman for organizing and running the afternoon BINGO games in August and to Rob Duggan for giving us a hand, to Margot Crawshaw for coordinating the weekly craft fairs, to Gwen May for organizing the 60's Sock Hop, a heartfelt thanks also to Kerri Ratcliffe for sponsoring a very entertaining community concert starring Amber Rubarth, and Dietrich Strause and Flora Curzon for the benefit of our Historical Society.

If you happened to miss the SIHS musical event by the amazing group of talented Islanders, **Wind, Waves and Way Back When**, you missed a very fun show! Many thanks to Katy Blake who organized, directed and participated in it. The group included Maili Bailey, Katy Blake, Mike Butera, John Follis, Bob Kohut, Iris Kubler-Dudgeon and Russ Scholl. Rumor has it they are already planning next year's event. [Maybe they'll call it "Swan's Island's Got Talent!"]

Thank you also to the volunteers who helped us keep the museum doors open this season including Gwen May, Nancy Carter, Dori LeMoine, Betsy Philbrook, Karn Junkins-Smith, and to Bev McCaloon for the great exhibits. Speaking of volunteers, we have an amazing team of Board members and Committee members working hard year-round for the benefit of SIHS. You'll find them listed towards the end of the newsletter. Without all our volunteers, we couldn't be doing what we are doing to record, preserve and share the wonderfully rich history of Swan's Island.

And last, but not least, thank you to all of you who supported us with your donations and attendance at our various programs. As you may know, we're facing some very large expenditures for addressing our beautiful building's structural and renovation needs. We will be forwarding the annual appeal soon with more details and we appreciate whatever you can do to help.

Best wishes for a lovely fall and mild winter! If you have any ideas on programs you'd like to see in 2023, please drop us a line at [historyswansisland@gmail.com](mailto:historyswansisland@gmail.com).

## Updates and Past Dates



### The Logo!

Sorry, the screen shot is a little fuzzy. It took a while, but when we saw the right logo...we knew! Thanks to our amazing Graphic Designer, Izzy Walter, and Willa Vennema, artist and chair of the Logo Committee, we have a new logo with four variations. Izzy took an architectural element from the peak of our historic building and incorporated it with font into this striking logo and corporate identity. Now you'll begin to see it on SIHS letterhead, website, and items for sale. Thank you Izzy for working patiently with the Committee: Laurie Easton Parker, Willa Vennema, Karen Dougherty, and Wesley Staples.

### The Prom

This incredible event (we hope it's a yearly affair), raised \$1200 to pay for supplies for the new art program at the school. We're lucky to have the talented Jessica DeFren as the new art teacher. Her children's program at the Library was amazing. She hit it out of the stacks! Check out Jennifer Sytsma's post on the Swan's Island info page here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/193238370714738/posts/5547765168595338/>

### Our Schools

In June we said "Goodbye" to the Eighth Graders at Swan's Island Elementary School, and "Hello" to them as new passengers on the morning and evening ferry runs. In the 19th and much of the 20th centuries there were three sizeable schoolhouses on Swan's Island as pictured below, so three graduations, one in each village. Island teachers were dedicated, memorable and, with parental support, obeyed. Several local women in the 19th and early 20th centuries (like Amy Staples, Luella Savage, and Hazel Staples), attended "Normal Schools" for teacher training, and returned home to Swan's Island to teach. Other teachers came from "away." Before there was ferry service, not all students chose to attend high school. A few lived with family/friends/strangers on the mainland, but at that time getting to and from the Island was a labor of love for students and everyone else. Following our series of articles about Island stores, we will offer stories about its five most recent schools. If you have pictures or stories about any of those schools, please send them to [newsletter@swansislandhistory.org](mailto:newsletter@swansislandhistory.org)



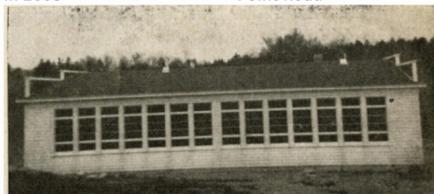
**The Atlantic School**  
Became the Library, burned In 2008



**The Minturn School**  
At the entrance to Stanley Point Road



**The Grindle Hill School**  
(1<sup>st</sup> consolidated, where TIMS now stands)



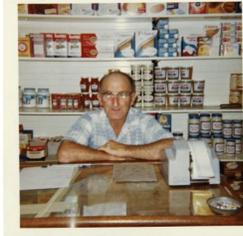
**Swan's Island Consolidated (1954, now the Town Office, Post Office, Police Station**



**Current and amazing Swan's Island Elementary School**

## A Blast from the Past

Notes from our Historian, Dexter Lee



*Storekeepers Maynard & Ethel Staples purchased the store and post office in Atlantic located across the road from the Baptist Church, from Cleveland and Bessie Dunham. Bessie was the Postmaster from 1940 to 1956 when Ethel assumed her position. and Maynard became the storekeeper in Cleve's place.*

*In the 1960's it was the custom for all the guys to stop there in the evening, get a soda from the chest cooler, get a candy bar and shoot the breeze. They used to have Smoothie Peanut Butter Cups that came with a card worth a few points toward another cup. We would give them to Maynard and he would save them, get free cups and give them to us. Like other stores, he also had a large stock of penny candy.*

*Maynard was short and kept cereal boxes on the top shelf. If someone wanted a box of Corn Flakes he would stab the box with the knife he used to cut cheese from a large wheel, to retrieve it. Between sales he would sit on a wooden Moxie box next to the stove and after carefully taking stock of the allotment of cigarettes in his pocket, smoke with us.*

*At least once a year the beautiful wooden floor was oiled with linseed oil.*

*Ethel was the Commander and Chief of the Post Office and would kick us all out by 9:00 in the evening.*

*Maynard died in 1982 and Ethel continued as Postmaster until 1990. In 1997 the Post Office was closed and combined with the Swan's Island Post Office in the old Swan's Island Consolidated School building, the site of the present Town Office.*

Ethel grew up in Harbor Village, where she worked as a young girl baiting trawls at Falkins Wharf for 25 cents to 50 cents a day, and that money went to her mother to help the family. She always said times were tough, but they made the best of it with what they had (family, friends and Swan's Island). Ethel worked many jobs in her life, but the longest was at the Post Office starting as Bessie's assistant. On March 12, 1958, she became the new Atlantic Postmaster, and she and Maynard took over the store which they ran until about 1977. People remember the little store where customers could sit on old soda crates by the little black stove after getting their mail or groceries and visit for awhile. After the store closed for the night, you could still go to get mail (and smell the best home-cooked meals you can ever imagine). Her door was always open to friends and family who would come for a visit in her bright, sunny, warm kitchen. On Aug. 29, 1990, after 34 years working as a postmaster, she retired. In 1996, she opened **The What Knot Shop**, where she sold homemade gifts that she and other island people made. She always loved crafts, like making a special Christmas ornament for each grandchild. In the fall, you could find her making cucumber relish and other pickles for the year ahead, and to her delight, sending people home with a jar or two. A very dear friend of hers entered her cucumber relish in the New York State Fair and **Ethel WON... a blue ribbon** While the rest of the world was busy and distracted by hubbub, Ethel was always just a phone call or a visit away. She died peacefully at home in 2006 at 90.

An amazing couple, and lives well lived.

## SIHS COMMITTEE NEWS

**Archive Committee:** Our Islanders and visitors were very generous with their continuing contributions of historical artifacts and photos this summer. We're very excited to have Olivia Jolley, our Island Fellow, starting with us in early September. Olivia comes from San Diego CA, and has studied Human Ecology at the College of the Atlantic. With Olivia's help, we're hoping to make good progress on recording what we have in Past Perfect, our software program, so that we can preserve and share it! **If you have time this fall/winter and would like to help the Archive committee, please email Gwen May at [gwenm@swansislandhistory.org](mailto:gwenm@swansislandhistory.org)**

**Building Committee:** The Building Committee is busy! The main floor beam in our annex broke in June. Many thanks to Ben Tongue, Florian Schieff, and Gary Turner for identifying several support issues for that section of the building: poor drainage has caused significant decay of the floor joists. Given that and a number of other structural issues, the Board voted to eventually, when funds for rebuilding it become available, tear down and replace the annex as part of our overall reconstruction/renovation plans for the building. In addition, the Board voted to sell the mobile home in the rear of the property and have it removed providing easier access for addressing the drainage issues, more space for parking and potential ramp access to the building. Details on the sales process will be communicated once they are finalized. **If you have any interest in purchasing the mobile home, please contact us at [historyswansisland@gmail.com](mailto:historyswansisland@gmail.com).**

**Thanks also to Jessica Harrington for her magnificent plantings in the front of the building. If you are interested in helping us out in any or all of our many building projects, please e-mail Ben at [BenTongue@verizon.net](mailto:BenTongue@verizon.net).**

**Communications Committee:** Last season's digital newsletter was very well received! Many thanks to Wesley, Editor, and Laurie, Jessica, and Janet for their continuing work on the newsletter.

**Fundraising/Events Committee:** It was a great summer filled with events. We have a lot of fundraising work to do to provide for the renovations and upgrades needed to continue to keep Swan's Island History alive for the future! **If you have ideas or can help us with our grant research and fundraising, even from the comfort of your own home, please email Nancy at [ncarterhouse500@gmail.com](mailto:ncarterhouse500@gmail.com)**

**Logo Committee:** We have a logo! Thanks to our brilliant graphic designer, Izzy Walter, to Willa Vennema and to the committee for coordinating with her.

**If you have ideas for the newsletter or photo contributions, please send them to Wesley Staples at [newsletter@swansislandhistory.org](mailto:newsletter@swansislandhistory.org).**

## News from Our Friends at SIES, Lobster & Marine Museum & The Lighthouse

**(SIES) THE LIBRARY:** First of all, the Swan's Island Educational Society had an exciting "unveiling" of its Memorial Brick Path around the Library on Sunday the 18th. Generations will look at these memorials and remember. Job well done! The summer season at the library was again a huge success in spite of lingering Covid-19 and its ugly sibling variants. AND everyone should keep in mind that along with the Fire Station this is a designated emergency gathering location with electricity, heat, water, etc. in case of emergencies. <https://swansislandeducationalociety.org/>

**THE LOBSTER & MARINE MUSEUM:** The Swan's Island Lobster & Marine Museum tells the story of commercial fishing in Maine, through the history of fishing on Swan's Island. It is a history unearthed and preserved by two brothers, Theodore and Galen Turner, who have lived on Swan's Island their whole lives. As they worked on and around boats Ted and Galen became aware of the rich Maritime history of their community and the fact that it was rapidly disappearing. Over several decades of preservation work they have searched out models and artifacts from island attics, talked to island old-timers about how things used to be done, dived into the harbor to retrieve old equipment, restored old motors, built models, and researched newspapers and historical archives for details about fishing and boat building in their community.

Today the museum has exhibits encompassing boat building, fishing, antique equipment, boat models, photographs, tools, Native American artifacts and natural history from over 200 years of maritime history on Swan's Island. Run entirely by volunteers and donations, the museum is open five days a week from June through mid-September.

At the Museum you can see:

- \* Antique fishing equipment and old-time fishing techniques for cod, haddock, mackerel, halibut, swordfish, scallops, herring and lobster.
- \* Boat models and photographs of schooners, chebaccos, pinkies, steamships and early power boats.
- \* Boat building artifacts and antique tools.
- \* Historic navigation equipment.
- \* A century-long collection of lobster gear.
- \* Native American artifacts.
- \* Photo albums about how folks lived and fished in the old days.

Take a look here at the great new addition to the Museum:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1061376453891718>

**THE LIGHTHOUSE:** How can one mention the Swan's Island Lighthouse and Friends of the Swan's Island Lighthouse (FOSIL) without feeling an enormous debt of gratitude for Fran and Eric Chetwynd. We swear, the next time any one of us is having lunch with the Pope we will nominate them for sainthood. Meanwhile, since the lunch thing with the Pope is a longshot, maybe we should just express gratitude, much and often, for their role and the roles of the rest of the FOSIL group in preserving this huge part of our history and our identity. Job VERY well done. <https://www.burntcoatharborlight.com/>

**FIRE DEPARTMENT & EMS** Congratulations to Shepard Walker who graduated from the Hancock County Fire Academy this year and jointed the Department. Lincoln and Ezra Johnson are next! A huge thank you to these guys and the unselfish folks below for keeping us safe. Their Annual Lobster Cookout was, as usual, a big success. The whole island looks forward to it. This, like the Community Thanksgiving Dinner in November and a lot of other things, shows the Island's amazing community spirit. We are in all ways, in it together...a true American Village. <https://www.facebook.com/Swans-Island-Fire-Department-262772170452577/>



### Dear Clyde

*Dear Clyde: Do you remember our family store, the Harbor Cash Market*

Your friend,  
Sonny

**Dear Sonny: Yes, and Just to jog your memory:** The fuzzy pic below is of your Dad and you. Your Dad, Myron, has his dinner pail in hand because he's on his way home from being out to haul. He eventually bought the 2nd building at the top, on the left, The *Harbor Cash Market*. The store was nothing less than magical. It had almost anything one needed (like TIMS!). It was where today's seniors went in the 1950s through the 1970s to get peanuts from the barrel, penny candy, and ice cream...and adults to get almost everything else, even word-of-mouth news; the important things in life. Some remember running into Walter Cronkite, Nelson Rockefeller, Teddy, Robert and John F. Kennedy. They all visited during summers when they anchored their boats in the Harbor. Do you remember Nelson Rockefeller hitching a ride in the back of a pickup from Sprague's Wharf (where the Coop now is, owned by your Dad's brother, Bill) on the way to Harbor Cash, waving to folks along the way as if on the campaign trail? Honestly? Most folks didn't know who he was. In some ways the store was like the others on the Island at the time: a place to not only shop for supplies, but to meet, and talk, and get or make the news. Cash didn't always figure in, so credit was given...the Spragues were generous and long-suffering. In 1983 the Hindmans bought the market, named it "Hindman's Harborside Market," and carried on the tradition of "small store with everything." I found some of your memories...

[A trip down memory lane:](#)

[1957 to 1974: https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/61859](https://www.mainememory.net/artifact/61859)

In June of 1979 Harbor Cash Market became Hindman's Harborside Cash, doing honor to its past while offering cooked food (great calzones and pizzas).



*Swan's Island Historical Society*



Walter Cronkite stops by in 1981.



Ricker Ranquist, store owner in and Myron, sharing the news.



Janice Hopkins joking with Myron. Wilson Burns and Diane Hindman at Hindan's Harborside Market

## Passings

These are our newest guardian angels:



Marilyn Rees  
Joe Brackin  
Terri Jo Staples Sinclair  
Brett Smith  
Anne Easton

# Poetry from Atlantic Road

For the growing number of us who have dealt with the diseases of dementia or are now dealing with them, Gary has allowed us to reprint this hauntingly moving poem from his book, *Adrift*, about his Mother's struggle with Alzheimer's.



## Imposter

Bobbi wants me to call her  
son for help. "I am your son,"  
my response reeks of

shock. "Your name might be  
Gary, too," Bobbi replies, "but you  
are not my son, Gary.

Who knows what's what."  
Bobbi's words buckle as if each  
one is warped, twisted

out of shape. "When I see him,  
Mom," I smile at my daughter sitting  
nearby, a sadlovefear smile

that my brain might forget her  
one day, too, "I'll give Gary your  
message, have him call you."

Bobbie thanks me for knowing  
what's what, says her son's voice  
Is a lot like mine.

*FROM: Adrift, the Love and Loss of Living with Dementia*

by Island poet Gary Rainford (Someone please nominate him for Maine Poet Laureate)

## Out & About: Community News

### Comprehensive Planning Committee Report From Sonja Philbrook, Chairwoman



Nothing has changed since the last newsletter; no word from Noel or the State so the plan is still waiting to be reviewed for an initial approval before it is presented to the town for a vote to accept or decline it. Noel and the Committee have worked diligently for years to establish a plan for Swan's Island's future. The State will dot the i's and cross the t's, then Islanders will have the final say when the State hands it back, hopefully, bureaucracy willing, in the near future.

If you have questions or comments please contact the CPC Chair, Sonja Philbrook at [sphilbrook@mdirss.org](mailto:sphilbrook@mdirss.org)

### Mill Pond Health Center Services submitted by Donna Weigle



Repeated thanks to Donna and to Laurie for their tireless work at the Mill Pond Health Center. They've seen the Community through the worst of Covid19, and continue to oversee the following services:

----- Primary Care Medicine: Mount Desert Island Hospital's Family Nurse Practitioner, Melissa Lower, visits Swan's Island once a month and Dr. Gabriel Plourde visits every other month.

----- Podiatry: Dr. Robert Scovin has been providing patient care on the island for more than 20 years.

----- Dentistry: Dr. Timothy Oh and the staff of Caring Hands of Maine Dental Center come out to the clinic every three months and have been providing services for Swan's Island patients for more than 10 years.

----- Phlebotomy: Weekly blood draws are offered on Tuesday mornings

----- Telemedicine: Remote medical care, has been in place since the clinic opened its doors. It has evolved over the years, but is still offered to patients for many medical and behavioral health reasons.

----- AA and NA: Meetings are held regularly at the health center.

**Social Services:** A wide variety of social services have been held at the health center over the years, but had to be put on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic. It looks like these services will all be restored soon.

Donna has been heroically providing medical and social services to the Swan's Island community through the Mill Pond Health Center since it opened in 2007. A few years ago, Laurie Farley began working with her. Together they make a great team and bring a vast array of medical experience.

**Contact: Health Center Telephone/526-4264 or Fax/526-4038. You can also call Donna at home at 526-4101**  
<http://www.swansisland.org/index.php/island-information/island-health-center>



**SEASONAL FLU SHOTS  
and  
COVID BOOSTERS  
Thursday, October 27  
12:00 - 3:30pm  
Mill Pond Health Center**

**ADULTS ONLY  
COVID BOOSTERS ARE FREE**  
No charge for flu shots if you have Medicare or MaineCare  
Please bring your Medicare or MaineCare card.

Standard Flu shot: \$45  
High Dose: \$140 (recommended for seniors)  
If you have private insurance, you will need to pay and get reimbursed by your insurer.  
If you have no insurance, be prepared to pay, cash or check made out to MDI Hospital.

Contact Donna Wiegler with any questions: 526-4101  
or email: donna@swansisland.org

### Mill Pond Health Center Schedule of Care Providers

10/26---Melissa Lower Family Nurse Practitioner  
11/10---Dr Gabriel Plourde  
11/23---Melissa Lower Family Nurse Practitioner  
12/28---Melissa Lower Family Nurse Practitioner

AA---Wednesdays at 7pm  
NA---Saturdays at 7PM

**Swan's Island EMS-----911**

### Swan's Island Yacht Club

Submitted by Barbara Howland



Founded in the summer of 2017 as the world's most inclusive yacht club, we are a volunteer run 501(c)(3) organized to provide sailing education and free use of sailing equipment by welcoming all who want to share in the beauty and fun of the sea surrounding our beloved island. We embrace both power and sail boats. The SIYC promotes amateur sailing competition, safe water sports, good sportsmanship, and responsible use of the marine environment. In five short years, our fleet has grown to include three Mercury 18' keel boats for our Adult Lesson and Mercury Sailing Programs and six Optimists for our Youth Sailing Program. Our volunteer instructors have taught over 1,000 lesson hours to more than 350 students in our free Youth and Adult Sailing Programs. The SIYC has realized part of its long-term goal of having floats of our own at our home wharf, Trafton's Wharf. We now have a float for our Youth Sailing Program and in the summer of 2023, we will launch a dedicated float for the Yacht Club. We are currently fundraising for the ramp needed to access our floats. For more information about the SIYC, email swanssailors@gmail.com

*"A sailor is an artist whose medium is the wind."*  
— Webb Chiles, Writer & Sailor

### Breakfasts at the Hall

**October 9!  
7 to 9 AM - all you can eat!**

**Last one til next Summer! If you've left the Island for the season....eat your heart out!**

**Then & Now: Shoptalk With Normie Burns & David Joyce**

**Dr. Herman Small tells us that in 1876 there were 118 men fishing in Swan's Island waters and each fisherman made an average of \$475 a year. Each made his own traps from Island wood, lathes.... (A teaser.....to be continued in the Winter issue!)**

## Islanders Who Are Making a Difference

Again: Please support Katelynn's [Swan's Island Stray Cat Program](#)

Our history will record the compassion of Swan's Islanders toward one another, and because of the heroic efforts of Katelynn LeMoine and others, it will also record compassion toward Island animals. If you are interested in helping her you can email her at [knotty.girl@icloud.com](mailto:knotty.girl@icloud.com).

And one more huge CUDO to Terry for his tireless and heroic work at the Bread of Life Food Pantry. Thank you Terry!

[https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/shelter/me\\_bread-of-life-food-pantry](https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/shelter/me_bread-of-life-food-pantry)

The **greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated** (Gandhi) And, of course, the way we treat one another!

WINTER TRANSFER STATION HOURS WILL BE IN EFFECT SOON:



## Helpful Links

The Town of Swan's Island  
<http://www.swansisland.org/>

Ferry Schedule and Pricing:  
<http://swansisland.weebly.com/swans-island-ferry-service.html>

[Click here to DONATE or SUBSCRIBE...Pretty Please...with lobster salad on top!](#)

## Note from the Editor

TO DOWNLOAD THIS NEWSLETTER CLICK THE BOX BELOW:

DOWNLOAD NEWSLETTER  
HERE

It's hard to limit the info in TCJ because the more you look the more you find and want to share. Left unbridled and unedited by the Committee each issue would be twice or more as long.

We're hoping that you'll chip in by sending voluntary subscriptions, and suggest \$20/yr (more, less, or none...all okay) for the four seasonal issues and the monthly **News Notes** also available online.

If you have news or announcements or comments for the "Winter Issue" or want to "Ask Clyde," please let us know by emailing info to [newsletter@swansislandhistory.org](mailto:newsletter@swansislandhistory.org)

Thanks for making history with us,  
Wesley

These and future issues will only be available by email or online at [swansislandhistory.org](http://swansislandhistory.org) unless you specifically request a printed copy.



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