

# Smithfield Maine Historical Society

2016 Newsletter



**The Smithfield Maine Historical Society was founded in 2009. We are an active organization devoted to preserving the History of Smithfield.**

Our Historical Society enters its 7th full year of existence in 2016. The GROVES HOUSE, our home, is located at 21 Lakeview Drive!

## **President's column**

We begin our 7<sup>th</sup> year of the Smithfield Maine Historical Society (SMHS), leaving behind an incredibly rewarding 2015 and looking forward to a fulfilling 2016. Personally it was a very rewarding year. I've made many Smithfield friends through my work in the society and look forward to meeting more of you who can share your stories of Smithfield's history.

Smithfield has an exciting history, and much of that story is stockpiled in the heads of many of our citizens. Our goal is to capture that knowledge before we lose it. I wish we could make it

happen overnight, but it takes time. The good news is that we've made great progress so far, and will continue to seek out new stories. If you have information about our town, please contact me (362-5340) or Richard Witham (634-4392).

In the articles in this second issue of the SMHS annual newsletter you'll read about the many activities that our active members made happen last year, and some that we hope to accomplish next year. We meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday each month March through October at 9:30 AM at the Groves House. Please stop by for one of our meetings.

Mel Croft  
SMHS President

## Monthly Meetings

The Smithfield Maine Historical Society held monthly meetings at the Groves House on the 3rd Saturday of the month March through October 2015. Each meeting began with a business discussion followed by a historical program. The meetings ended with coffee and desserts and a lot of socializing.

Programs in 2015 included a "Making of Smithfield" quiz where members were asked questions covered in our book released late 2014 titled *The Making of Smithfield*. We were pleased to find that our members have read the book very closely and scored very high. We also made a presentation on our book at the Norridgewock Historical Society as well as the Maine Lakes Resource Center in Belgrade. Jim Landherr and Val Center talked about "Smithfield" through time at one meeting, the focus of our Groves House program for the Smithfield 175<sup>th</sup> celebration.

We also visited local history buff Peter Downing where we were treated to a variety of local artifacts. We had a large turnout and had fun asking questions about artifacts that many of us didn't recognize. Thanks to Peter and family for answering all of our questions. Finally, a small group of members made a trip up to Mount Tom to assess the accessibility for a larger trip in 2016. Marilyn Giroux, one of our senior members, made it all the way up to the Bigelow cellar hole, setting the challenge for the younger members.

We have decided to focus our 2016 programs on local folks who have made an impact outside of Smithfield. For example we plan to make presentations about Maine Governor John H. Reed, and others; we hope to learn even more from our members who may have actually known these people.



Richard Witham at the Maine Lakes  
Resource Center



Peter Downing explaining farm  
equipment from the past

## Smithfield 175<sup>th</sup> Celebration

Five members of the SMHS were part of the committee that planned Smithfield's very successful 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. There were many decisions to be made to ensure that the event came off as planned, afforded events for all ages, and made people proud to live in Smithfield. Thanks to the hard work of many, I think we met our goals for the celebration.

The weekend began Friday evening with supper and music at the Fairview Grange. Saturday featured events throughout the town, including the Grange, Groves House, and Town office. The Grange offered events more focused on adults whereas the town office catered to our younger citizens. There was an inflatable obstacle course and bounce house, which the children could not get enough of, and face painting and balloons. A favorite was the dunk tank where many a future hall of famer dunked our selectmen and other prominent citizens. There was a Classic Car Show at Morrow's Garage and old fire station. The Sunbeam Roller Rink also sponsored an event.

Sunday brought the parade and re-dedication of the town office. There was even an Elvis Presley Review on Sunday!

Val Center and Jim Landherr were the masterminds behind developing a 175<sup>th</sup> theme for the Groves House. The exhibit highlighted Smithfield through the years with emphasis on 1890, 1915, 1940, 1965, 1990 and 2015. Historical data and artifacts were highlighted for each of these anniversary years. Facts presented included items like the cost of a first class stamp, a gallon of gas, the population of the town and political leaders locally, state wide and nationally. Members of the historical society contributed time period clothing and memorabilia as well as research information. Many members of the community and visitors viewed the exhibit during the 175th anniversary weekend celebration.

We had over 250 visitors stop by the Groves House, where we had many SMHS items for sale; T-shirts, caps, tote-bags, pens, mugs, our book, and more. The pancake breakfast and bake sale, held in conjunction with the 175<sup>th</sup> celebration, were a huge success again this year. With members Joyce and Roger Staples leading the effort, community members enjoyed pancakes, sausage, homemade baked beans, juice and coffee on the Saturday morning of the anniversary celebration weekend. Baked goods included whoopie pies, breads, jellies, and an assortment of cookies. Over a hundred people participated to help raise almost \$600. Our float won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Organizations category in the parade on Sunday. A number of artifacts on the float were from the personal collection of David Hartford.

This was an event that we can all be proud of. Thanks to the Town of Smithfield and selectmen for approving the funds to cover this wonderful event and to the committee members who did the planning and kept the costs low.



The Groves House during the 175<sup>th</sup> parade



Smithfield town office during the 175<sup>th</sup> celebration



Joyce & Roger Staples. Joyce is a Direct descendent of Michael Groves, settler of Mount Tom.



SMHS 2<sup>nd</sup> place float



Brigadier General Darren Hartford; Parade Grand Marshall



SMHS Items For Sale

## Renovation of the Groves House

We are fortunate to have a home where we can meet and display artifacts and historical materials for the enjoyment of our members and citizens of Smithfield. One of our favorite relics is the old mail wheel over 100 years old, an important part of Smithfield's history! The Groves House is our home, and over the years, with a little tender love and care and some dollars, we have made much needed repairs so we can protect our displays.

Last year we replaced the windows on the front porch, partially paid for by SMHS members. We also decided to enlarge our meeting area by widening the narrow doorway leading into the kitchen. The small meeting room was very cramped during our monthly meetings; members often had to sit in a nearby room where hearing and seeing what was going on was quite difficult. With the doorway widened, we now have a much larger meeting area that fits our needs. I hope that our membership increases to the point where the new meeting area becomes overcrowded when we get together.

Our next project is to renovate the garage area at the back of the house for much needed display room. This is a large and costly project, and we are presently working on a plan that will hopefully allow us to begin soon and do the project in phases.



Our expanded meeting area at the Groves House

## **SMHS Oldest Citizen Cane**

In May, 2014 Leland Bulmer II kindly donated the “Smithfield oldest citizen cane” to the SMHS. He made the cane from oak wood from a tree that he played in as a child. That same month Mel Croft, President of SMHS, presented the Smithfield oldest citizen cane to Pearl Dudley Wilde, which she held until her death in November, 2015.

The cane was subsequently presented to Yvonne Mitchell in December, 2015. Mrs. Mitchell has lived in Smithfield for more than 50 years, and as you can tell from the photo below she was very pleased with the honor.



Mel Croft presenting the oldest citizen cane to Yvonne Mitchell

## **SMHS 2016 Calendars**

Calendars are still available and can be purchased for \$6.00 at the Town Office or from Richard Witham (634-4392).

## **2016 Open House**

We plan to reassess our open house dates early this year. We may continue our current program of opening the Groves House on selected Saturdays, or we may elect to hold one or two day long special openings. Keep your eyes open for an announcement later this winter.

## **SMHS Website Coming**

Presently the SMHS promotes our activities on Facebook, which is reasonably effective. However, a website would be much more effective, therefore we plan to have an SMHS website available later in our 2016 season. We plan to include a plethora of information about our society, including ongoing events, a list of our officers, photographs of Mount Tom cellar holes, maps, census sheets-well I think you get the picture. Keep your eyes open for an announcement for when the site is up and running.

Until our website is up and running, please join us on our Facebook page to keep up with SMHS happenings.

## **Thank you Ted Harlow!**

The property line on the east side of the Groves House property used to run flush with the side of our garage; not the best situation. However, the issue has been remedied by the generous donation of approximately a ten feet strip of land by our neighbor Ted Harlow. Now we have a bit more breathing room. Ted's kindness is typical of kind of support the community had given the SMHS, and it is much appreciated. Many thanks also go to Scott Campbell, a local surveyor who did all of the necessary survey work free of charge. We also thank SMHS member David Hartford for asking Scott to do the work.

## **Donations**

Financial donations are always greatly appreciated and can be made by calling Richard Witham (634-4392) or Mel Croft (362-5340). We are a non-profit, tax exempt organization under section 501© (3) of the Internal Revenue code of 1954 and Title 13-B of the Maine Revised Statutes. (If you do not want to join us, but want to support our mission, all donations are tax deductible).