

Smithfield Maine Historical Society

2017 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 8th full year of existence in 2017. The GROVES HOUSE, our home, is located at 21 Lakeview Drive!

President's Column

Your Smithfield Maine Historical Society continues to work towards the fulfillment of our mission; to preserve the history of Smithfield. I'd like to thank those of you who visited the Groves House this summer. It's refreshing to know that many of the citizens of Smithfield have an interest in how our town has evolved over the past 176 years since it was incorporated. We are committed to making the Groves house accessible to anyone who wishes to visit, so look for our summer schedule this coming spring. Like the past two years, we plan to open our home for an all-day event this coming summer. We're still working on the details but we hope to see you

there. If those dates do not fit your schedule, then give us a call and we can arrange a time convenient for you.

Everywhere I lived during my career I was very interested in the local history, and when I moved to Smithfield 9 years ago I had the same yearning. The wonderful book, *The History of Smithfield* by Deane Ferm and Debra Campbell was a great start, but as I got to know some of the residents of our town I knew there was much more to learn. Fortunately I found the newly chartered SMHS and the rest is history, pun intended. Several years ago Richard Witham and I co-authored a book that augments Ferm and Campbell's book, focusing primarily on Mount Tom. We have copies for sale at the Groves House.

Our society feels privileged to serve our town and we appreciate the support that everyone has given us. Thank you!

Mel Croft
SMHS President

Donations

What does the society do with your donations and the funds that we raise? A small portion is spent on keeping our building running; gas, electricity, insurance, etc. We also replaced the windows on the front porch of the Groves House several years ago and have done much needed renovations inside. We save money until we have adequate funds to pay for these renovations; it generally takes several or more years to fund a renovation project. We are very fortunate to have had the Groves House donated to us, but it is more than 145 years old and requires additional renovation of the back room and garage for additional display space. Unfortunately we discovered this summer that two of the walls of the basement required significant repair, which required the funds we had saved for the back room and garage renovation. Therefore we need to rebuild our renovation fund. The town of Smithfield has supported us over the past 8 years, plus we have carried out numerous fundraisers every year.

Financial donations are always greatly appreciated and can be made by calling Mel Croft (362-5340) or Richard Witham (634-4392). 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).

Please consider making a donation to the SMHS. We have several ideas that we are considering for fund raising events for 2017, and welcome suggestions.



The renovated meeting room
at the Groves House

Fundraising Events

This past year we held a variety of fundraising events. On July 30 we opened the Groves House for the day and offered spinning demonstrations, tours of the Groves House, gave away free homemade ice cream with maple syrup made by Roger Staples, and offered merchandise for sale; our history book, tote-bags, SMHS calendars along with other items. SMHS member Kay Young's daughter, Debbie Eaton, gave weaving demonstrations on a loom and showed visitors how to spin yarn. We held our annual pancake breakfast at the Baptist Church on the same day. We also held a bake sale on Election Day. Thanks to everyone who supported us!

We'll post announcements around town for next year's events, so be on the lookout.



The SMHS annual
pancake breakfast.

Monthly Meetings



SMHS members enjoy one of
our monthly history programs

The SMHS meets March through October on the 3rd Saturday at the Groves House at 9:30 AM. Our meetings always begin with business matters, such as planning for fundraisers or events, and wrap up with fellowship and delicious treats baked by our talented members. Most meetings include a historical program. Normally the programs are based on local history, but this year we decided to take advantage of member knowledge of national events.

We kicked off the season with a discussion of Robert Rushworth, a hot shot Air Force Pilot. Rushworth was born in Madison, Maine on October 9, 1924. He married a woman from Norridgewock and many locals still recall stories of Rushworth buzzing (flying over very low) his mother-in-law's house located in Norridgewock while he was stationed in Maine. He flew a variety of aircraft in WWII and the Korean War, including transport and fighter jets. But Rushworth is best known for flying the X-15 hypersonic rocket-powered aircraft. He made his first flight on November 4, 1960 and over the next six years made 34 flights in the X-15, the most of any pilot. This included a flight to an altitude of 285,000 feet, made on June 27, 1963. This flight above 50 miles qualified Rushworth for astronaut wings. Only 12 men flew this temperamental jet; one of the other pilots was Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon, placing Rushworth in rare company. He is buried in Madison's Forest Hill Cemetery. The Madison Historical Society houses a treasure trove of Rushworth articles, photographs, and other information. One of our future projects is to take a close look at all this information and build a more complete story of Rushworth.



NASA Dryden Flight Research Center Photo Collection
<http://www.dfrc.nasa.gov/gallery/photoindex.html>
NASA Photo: E-14793 Date: 1962
Major General Robert A. Rushworth

Major General
Robert Rushworth

Our second program of the season was on Governor John Hathaway Reed. Reed served as governor of Maine from 1959 to 1966, but first began coming to North Pond with his family to enjoy the beautiful summers when he was a toddler, and is known to many Smithfield residents. His residence, named Camp Aroostook because that is where his family was from, still stands on the shore of North Pond.



John Reed with President Eisenhower:
Maine governor
1959-66

Next up was a program on the history of the Groves House. Richard Witham researched the deeds of the property and determined that on March 29, 1871 Mrs. Caroline Sawyer purchased the property from Mr. Moses A. Piper. It changed hands nine times until Joyce Staples donated the house to the SMHS. Unfortunately Richard was unable to determine when the house was built; there are no records prior to the 1871 sale. The Smithfield Maine Historical Society held its first meeting at Groves House on June 16, 2012.

Most Mainer's are familiar with Abner Coburn, the 30th Governor of Maine, and the topic of discussion at our July meeting. Coburn descended from Edward Coburn who immigrated to

America in 1635. His brother, Eleazor, was a prominent land surveyor of his day, and carried out the first survey of portions of Mt. Tom.



Abner Coburn: Maine governor
1863-64

In August SMHS member Tom Kirkendall spoke to us about an exciting project he worked on many years ago; the Rescue of an Intelsat Communications Satellite. In 1969 Tom joined a newly formed space communications company, the Communications Satellite Corporation, as a Member of the Technical Staff at the COMSAT Laboratories. He was in charge of analytical chemistry and failure analysis. Later he was the Manager of semiconductor reliability and quality assurance department. Following 23 years at COMSAT he then did consulting work for NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Lockheed Martin, Intelsat, Boeing, and others. It was during this time that Tom was asked to determine if a sick earth orbiting Intelsat communications satellite could be repaired. The satellite had been in orbit for several years and NASA was concerned that sensitive parts of the satellite may have been damaged by solar rays. Tom developed an experiment that was carried into orbit on the space shuttle that would determine the amount of damage. To cap off the presentation, Tom brought along a piece of the

experiment that flew into space on the Discovery spacecraft. By the way, Tom's experiment showed that the satellite could be repaired, which was done on a later space shuttle mission.



SMHS member Tom Kirkendall with the apparatus that flew into space on the space shuttle.

The group had a fun time at our September meeting where Richard Witham grilled them on facts of Smithfield. Our members did very well on the quiz, earning an A+. If you'd like to see how much you know about Smithfield, that quiz is included in this newsletter (see below) so give it a try.

Tom's program on the space shuttle was enthusiastically received by everyone in attendance, so at our final meeting of the season we talked about Challenger and Columbia, space shuttle orbiters which were destroyed in 1986 and 2003, killing all 14 astronauts (7 on each mission). One tenant of history is to not believe everything you read without doing additional research to verify its authenticity. This is true of these two terrible disasters; some of the facts often heard on the news or printed in books and magazines about the cause of these tragedies are erroneous. For instance, Challenger did not explode as commonly thought. Instead it simply broke apart when the solid rocket boosters were torn away from the orbiter due to faulty O rings. Seconds after it broke apart, the external fuel tank exploded, but the fate of the crew had already been determined.

We welcome you to attend our programs, even if you are not a SMHS member. Our meetings begin at 9:30 AM and the programs normally start between 10 and 10:30 AM. If you'd rather skip the business portion of the meeting, you are welcome to just attend the history program. And they are all free!

2017 Open House

We plan to reassess our open house dates early this year, but will open the Groves House on selected dates during June through September. 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.



July Open House at the Groves House. Weaving and spinning
Demonstration by Debbie Eaton.

Smithfield Facts

Below is the quiz given at our September meeting. See how many questions you can get correct. Answers can be found at the end of the newsletter.

1. How many major fires have destroyed parts of Smithfield?
2. When was the Baptist church dedicated?

3. When was the Smithfield Elementary school closed down?
4. When did the Municipal Offices and Fire Department move to the former Smithfield Elementary School Building?
5. Who are the Smithfield selectmen?
6. How many acres are contained in the town of Smithfield?
7. As of the census of 2010, how many people lived in Smithfield?
8. Historically, when did the population of Smithfield begin to decline?
9. As of the census of 2010 how many households were in Smithfield?
10. As of the census of 2010, how many families lived in Smithfield?
11. As of the census of 2010 what was the population density?
12. As of the census of 2010, what was the average age?
13. What was the estimated median household income in 2013?
14. Where do children of Smithfield go to school?
15. Who represents Smithfield in the state Senate?
16. Who represents Smithfield in the state House?
17. When did the Baptist Church hire its first regular on-going minister?
18. Who was the first minister of the Baptist Church?
19. When was the North Pond slide blown down?
20. When did Sweet Dreams open?
21. When did Morrow's open?
22. When did the Ice Cream Place open
23. When did Harlow's Store, now the Smithfield General Store, open?

Thank You Justin Furbush

Many people in the Smithfield community have contributed to our success-in different ways. Justin Furbush mowed the lawn at the Groves House this past year, and graciously decided not to send us a bill. Yes, he worked for free. The SMHS members thank Justin for his generosity. Justin provides a number of services-lawn mowing, snow plowing, road sanding, etc-so if you're looking for someone to hire, we highly recommend him!

SMHS 2017 Calendars and Other SMHS Items for Sale

Calendars are still available and can be purchased for \$6.00 at the Town Office or from Richard Witham (634-4392). Our calendars feature a monthly photograph of Smithfield from the past. In addition to our calendars, we still have tote bags and copies of our book-*The Making of Smithfield*-available for sale.



SMHS Website Coming

Presently the SMHS promotes our activities on Facebook, which is reasonably effective. However, a website would be much better; therefore we have been working on an SMHS website which we hoped would be available by the end of 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, and much more information about the history of our town. Unfortunately the person that we hired to build the website dropped the project before it was completed. Currently we are trying to build on the progress she made and find another webmaster to take over the project. If any knows of someone who can help, please contact Richard Witham or Mel Croft.

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

Answers to Quiz: Smithfield Facts

1. Two; 1913 and 1960. 22 buildings were destroyed
2. 1895
3. 2008
4. February 2009
5. 1st Selectmen, Richard A. Moore, 2nd Selectmen, Molly Chapman, 3rd Selectmen, Justin S. Furbush
6. 24.76 square miles, of which, 19.90 square miles of it is land and 4.86 square miles is water.
7. 1033
8. 1850's
9. 451
10. 314
11. 51.9 inhabitants per square mile
12. 49.2
13. \$45,160
14. Students start out at the Mill Stream School in Norridgewock for K-6 and then move on to Middle School for 7th & 8th and High School for 9th thru 12th in Skowhegan.
15. Sen. Rodney Whitemore
16. John Picchiotti
17. 1979
18. The reverend Bert Brewster
19. June 24, 1941
20. 2005
21. April 1, 1981
22. 2000
23. 1860