

ST. CROIX HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Holmes Cottage 1805



Dr. Job Holmes House 1850



Whitlock's Mill Lighthouse 1909

Editor: Lura Jackson

Volume 23, Issue #3

Calais, Maine

December 2014

Fleeting Seasons and Timeless Facades in Calais

As rapidly as it arrived, the warm weather has once again left us, though in return we are graced by the sweet smell of wood smoke and the quiet tranquility of winter mornings. This past fall was among the more beautiful in recent years with trees across the city exuding colors so vibrant they appeared to ignite the horizon. Fall foliage is more vibrant when the weather is dry, which causes a concentration of sugar levels in the trees that in turn speeds up the production of chemicals that have a red pigment. When that combines with cold temperatures that cause the green-producing chlorophyll to leech out, the vibrancy of the reds, oranges and yellows is magnified further still. Being in a climate capable of hitting that sweet spot of dry and cold air may not always be easy on the body, but the benefits manifest in subtly glorious ways.



The corner of Washington and Swan was a treat for the eyes in the fall.



At the corner of Washington and Church Street, the Eaton House was framed by majestic trees.

While we are on the topic of trees, it's worth noting that this past year has seen the end of numerous specimens around the community. The overly wet spring in conjunction with the high winds of Hurricane Arthur led to the toppling of trees both young and ancient. Furthermore, the restrictions of insurance companies on covering properties with trees have contributed to many homeowners cutting down trees that have been a part of the Calais neighborhoods for generations. As a city born from the lumber boom, the community has a natural affinity for the woods. It is, therefore, hard to not feel some loss whenever familiar gnarly silhouettes go missing from the city streets.

On a brighter note, downtown Calais has seen a number of renovations to the street facing facades of historical buildings in the past year. The Horton-Hill Building, Sarsaparilla Building, Unobskey Professional Building, and Jo's Diner are among those that have received funds to perform historically accurate restorations from the federal Community Development Block Grant. The St. Croix No. 1 Firehouse has been progressing nicely on its many interior projects, including restoring the upstairs area and the bell tower and, of course, the Holmes

Cottage has had its share of exterior repair work done as well.

Two buildings were torn down on North Street recently. The larger one on the corner leading to the city parking lot was quite old (at least 1880s), and it was once the location of the J.D. Bates Furniture Company. The one next to it was more modern. In the 1940s and '50s it housed the Calais Advertiser and in the '70s it was the Robin's Nest Bar.

Though the facade work being done in the city doesn't always correspond with structural reinforcement and increased usability, it does help to restore the aesthetics of buildings that have been slowly crumbling for decades. At the very least, such efforts go a long way toward preserving that occasional sensation of timelessness one can experience while walking down the Main Street of Calais.



The restoration of the Horton-Hill Block connects residents and visitors of Calais with an earlier time.

Past Meetings and Events

This past quarter has been a lively one for the Society. October's meeting was well-attended thanks to a presentation by Jay Beaudoin of Woodland Pulp on the history of the management of the St. Croix River and its watershed. Jay told us of the many natural marvels of the river, including the fine blue clay that sits atop the valley as a remnant of the last glacier, and the many species of dragonflies that flourish along its banks. The fifty-six dams that have been erected over the past few centuries were a highlight of the discussion as well as their impact on the flow of the river throughout time.



At the end of October, Jerry LaPointe and other society members conducted forty students from the Robbinston Grade School along the Riverwalk for an historical tour. The students were particularly interested in the notion of the trail having been a train track, with the covered bridge being a favorite highlight.

November's meeting featured a presentation by Al Churchill on the development of the roads, railroads and trains in Maine. While technical difficulties impaired the quality of the screening of the DVD on the subject, Al provided many interesting details on local transportation and the group as a whole enjoyed sharing a bemused discussion on the infamous Airline Road, among others.

At the close of November, Jerry guided nine boy scouts and their guests through the Holmes cottage

as part of a private tour of the historically restored doctor's residence. The scouts were interested and inquisitive and marveled at the many artifacts within the museum.

The Christmas Party at the Holmestead was a charming success with several members coming to enjoy companionship and refreshments amidst the seasonal decorations of the magnificent old home. Guests filled up on handmade sandwiches, cookies, and apple pie while reminiscing about times long past and catching up on recent happenings. Former society president Brand Livingstone (who has just celebrated his 92nd birthday) said it was a heartwarming affair that "brought life back to the house," adding that it was a special place filled with many memories.

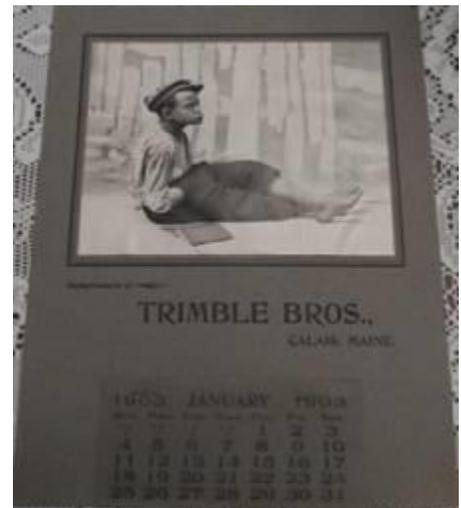


Contributions and Acquisitions Since the Last Newsletter

The society is the happy recipient of a collection of train memorabilia including newspaper clippings from the last run of the cargo trains to Calais and slide photographs of locomotives courtesy of Art and Cynthia Carter. The donation also included an antique Americana calendar from 1903 with the name of the Trimble Bros. featured on it.

Al got wind of a local diary that had been discovered in a lot in Massachusetts and made a savvy offer to purchase it. The diary was written by the Corliss women of Milltown.

The destruction of the buildings on North Street produced an interesting artifact that David Sivret rescued from the rubble and presented to us. It appears to be a general store business ledger dating to the 1820s with the names of many prominent families mentioned throughout.



Upcoming Events and Meetings

The next meeting of the society will take place in March. If you have any suggestions for presentations, tours, or activities for the next year, please let us know!

Memories of Calais: Clarence Beckett (continued)

Here we present the conclusion to former Calais mayor Clarence Beckett's (1901-2001) memories, with part one having been featured in the last edition. We rejoin Clarence during his recounting of his

somewhat wild youth, just after he explained a situation where he'd been caught and tied up with a block and tackle for an hour at the Boardman Barn by two neighborhood teenagers after ambushing them with ice-laced snowballs.

Up to this point in my life there was only one incident that was more of a shock. When Bill Goode and I were seven or eight years old we batted ball in Bill's side yard and broke a window. Bill's father was Chief of Police and he told us that if we did it again he would put us in jail. Shortly after that we broke another window. After dinner he took us, one on each side, and marched us down the Main Street to the city jail where he locked us up. He kept us there until supper time. Lesson learned: From that point, I always wanted to keep away from jails. The police officers at that time were Martin Goode, Bill McNamara, Steve Greenlaw, Howard Eye, and in Milltown, Steve Woodman and Fred McKnight. Steve Woodman was elected County Sheriff several times, then United States Marshall, before he was appointed Chief of the Highway Commission and was a power in State of Maine politics.

There were several barber shops working. The electric shaver hadn't been invented, and many of the merchants and lawyers had a daily shave at the barber shop where they could catch up on the local news. A shave cost 35 cents while a haircut was 75 cents or a dollar. Mike Casey with his three sons had the biggest shop while Perley Brittney ran the Hotel Barber shop, and Walter Howe and Wilbur King were also in the trade. Yet another could be found on the second floor of the Flat Iron Building. I had credit with Walter Howe as Beckett & Co owned the building. I wanted my hair cut pompadour (cut and brushed straight up) but Walter wouldn't do it because he said my father wouldn't like it so I went to the Caseys and he lost a customer.



Tom and Pat Casey



Emman's Hotel on Main Street.

Hotels and restaurants were well patronized in the early 1900's. Calais was the trading center for the surrounding towns, and there was a lot of river traffic. The Pettigrove House had 16 rooms. The (Brick) American House had 42 rooms and picked up passengers from the St. Stephen and local railways. The Andrews House, the Sprague House, Halls and Coosaboon Boarding Houses took care of a dozen or so, and the Boundary House in Milltown had 21 rooms. In the 20's the St. Croix and the Emman's hotels were always full on weekends as the traveling men made it their weekend stop. It was prohibition and

liquor was readily available in Canada or by bootleg in Calais, and the food was good.

Earlier William Poole had a businessman's club on the second floor of his building. There were pool and billiard tables, easy chairs, lounges, magazines, and daily papers. There was a kitchen, a fine cafe, and also a water closet [toilet]. There was a membership of 300. Poole also had a Ladies Restaurant on the 2nd floor with entrance on North Street. Davis Hayes had an oyster bar on North Street where the shells were finally discarded in the cellar. Oysters from Baltimore were brought in on ships and were served in most restaurants. Along with the hotels, Pat Welch, Russ Thomas, and Dave Driscoll served good food.

Calais was a great place to celebrate, and Halloween was looked forward to. Shortly after school closed in the afternoon the children rushed down street and a crowd of two or three hundred would start along the avenue and work their way along Main shouting “shell out” at each place of business. Bags of candy, peanuts, apples, etc. were thrown out from the 2nd story windows and there was a mad scramble to get it—usually some small kids were hurt. Most houses had a white fence with a gate in it and it was fun to take off the gate and swap it for another up the hill. Planks crossing the ditch by the house were also removed, outhouses were toppled over, and even a light buggy might be hauled up and left on a barn roof.

On Memorial Day the G.A.R. [Grand Army of the Republic] was strong and the Civil War Veterans were the bone of the parade that featured fire carts, floats, bands, fraternal organizations, clowns, etc. and marched from Church St. to North St. to Main as far as the International Bridge where flowers were thrown in the [St.Croix] river in memory of the lost sailors. [The parade marched] from the Bridge to the Memorial Park where a prominent citizen made a speech and a high school student recited the Gettysburg Address before marching on to the cemetery for the final services. The day before, ladies had gathered at the G.A.R. Hall and fashioned wreaths from fir, apple and cherry blossoms, lilacs and flowers that the boys brought in and later put wreaths on the grave of each soldier. A supper for the workers was put on at the hall.



The Fourth of July celebration started the night before. Small firecrackers, sparklers, 2 and 4 inch giant firecrackers, shy rockets, horns, and people wearing false faces were in abundance. The streets were crowded and the noise loud. The church and fire bells were rung at 5:00 A.M. Road races, bag races, and pie eating contests kept the kids busy until parade time. The parade started with the police and firemen in front with the band ahead of the veterans, fraternal organizations of Masons, Odd Fellows, Grangers, Red Men, Temperance Union, etc. Floats from the business section and other organizations whose floats had been worked on hour after hour were high in number. There were boat races and a ball game, and in the evening a grand display of fireworks (overseen by Bob Gillis the fire chief) at Memorial Park.

Lumber was still the king and there were eight water power sites on the river, producing power to run the several sawmills on both sides of the St. Croix River. These mills produced long lumber [from logs] that came down river in the spring drive and were sawed in different widths and lengths and cut for shingles and laths while trimmings made cheap firewood. Murchie, Eaton and Gates were the main mills and had stores where credit was extended to the family of the men working in the woods or in the mills. Ships were being built at the Rideout/Lord shipyard. George Elliot's machine shop at the foot of Barker St. was



Candy makers (most of whom are female) at Ganong's factory in St. Stephen, 1942.

building its patented “gang edger and ripper” saw and their “Striped Boiler”. The Shot Factory was close by and it was something to see [with] the fiery hot lead pellets blown into the air and landing in a giant pool of water. Not far away the shoe factory was busy with 60 to 80 workers and the Trimble Bros. factory (near the Ferry Point Bridge) employed more shoe workers. The Canadian Cotton Mill across the river at Milltown employed one hundred odd from both sides of the river until 1930 when only Canadians were employed. Ganong Bros. had a store in Calais near the bridge, but their candy factory in St. Stephen was the biggest in the Maritimes. John Gillespie had a carriage shop where he built buggies and wagons, as did Robinson & Son at the same location later. Red Beach was busy with the Granite Quarry and Plaster Mill. Rock was shipped in from New Brunswick, crushed and made into plaster. Red Beach had both black and red granite but black seemed to be the favorite for local monuments. The red was produced and cut for use in many state and public buildings throughout New England. These items were all shipped by water. The Tannery in Princeton was busy and with its hides coming and going, and with cotton and coal needed by the Canadian factory, it kept many longshoremen busy on the wharfs.

Holiday & Son, Chase Barker and Steve Wilder were harness makers. Deming & Sons had mill supplies. John Oliver and Joseph Hutchins were sail makers, Jim McVay, Phelan Bros, and George Tarbox were marble [& granite] workers. Percy Lord, McAllister and McIninch were druggists. Bradish and Beckett were bakers. John Gillis and George Eye were the local casket makers. Ed Whitney and George Wilkins were barbers in Milltown. Both Armour and Swift had wholesale meat outlets. Peter McGlinchy had a dry goods store that always reeked of tobacco pipe smoke. His clerk was Katy Hicks who had a high pitched voice and was quite a character. Barker, Todd Bros., and Taylor had hardware stores. Wallace Brown had a “Bargain” store at the corner of Main and Union. He was also Indian Agent and a rank Democrat. On one occasion when they were celebrating a party victory with lots of noise and cannon crackers exploding, Wallace climbed on top of the table to give a speech, but he couldn't control his bladder, so feeling a hot trickle in all the noise he thought he had been shot and fell to the table saying, “I am dying a loyal democrat.”



C.R. Pike's Store (selling flour, hay, seeds, and farming tools) and W. Woods and Co. Dry Goods on Main Street.

My aunt Helen Beckett had a store next to the Lord drug store where she sold crockery, glassware, linen, stationery, toilet soap, jewelry, silverware, combs and brushes. She was also agent for the Equitable Life Assurance Company. The store was next occupied by Mrs. Lockery who made and sold hats and carried bonnets, lace, flowers and ribbons. Mrs. Dailey was the fashionable dress maker, cutting and fitting, she was a specialty corset fitter. Most women bought yard goods and made their own clothes at home. Fanny Rideout came to the house each year for a stay and made dresses etc. for mother and the girls. There were many grocery stores: C.R. Pike (flour & hay), C.C. Whitlock on the corner of Salem & Poole streets, Waite on Main St. (dealer in flour, meal, produce, fish, potatoes and hoops), Rideout & Lord, taken over by Jim Marraty, H.C. McGregor, Gene Greenlaw, H.C. Murchie, A & P (Wrigley as

manager), Buel & Rutherford, Flood Bros, (meat), H.E. Eaton, (taken over by Will Mann), S.S. Pineo, and the Welch Bros. These and many corner stores carried flour, (by the barrel or 25# sacks), produce molasses and vinegar from the barrel, lard and cheese by the pound, dry fish, kerosene and coal oil, milk (often poured in your own pail), sugar, salt, etc.

Then there were stores selling fruit, candy, ice cream, and tobacco as was the case for A.R. Checchi, Tori Bros, Mike Dimetri, Beckett & Co., & L. Bernadini. Ross Bros, and Bailey Co. sold jewelry. E.C. Young & Stewart & Co. displayed furniture. Dentists were Dr. Wood and Dr. Moore, [who lived in the Holmestead on Main St.] and Dr. Charles Murphy (who had the first automobile in town), and Murphy's brother who was also a dentist. George Lowell was treasurer of the Savings Bank and Frank Gatcomb in the National Bank.



Steve McCoy had a float fastened to Barnard's wharf which rose and fell with the tide where he sold gasoline to the boats. He left for his house on North Street at noon for dinner. One day at noon at high tide Frank Purrington, whose father was boss at the [railroad] Round House., went down to the float where there were several boats tied up. Frank climbed aboard a large one, picked up a pole and called on me to join him. Just as I jumped he pushed the boat away and I went down in fifteen feet of water. I couldn't swim, but did kick myself over far enough to grab the underside of the float. Frank put up a yell and McCoy, coming back to work, rushed down and grabbed me with a boat hook. We were not supposed to be down there and I was pretty wet so I hid out on the wharf until my clothes dried out before I went home. I guess they never knew of the incident.



the spring run of smelts, an occasional salmon, clams to be dug, lobster and crabs and flounders could be pulled in anywhere. [Fin.]

Winter was colder in the tens [1910's] and there was more snow and the streets were not plowed, so it was an advantage to have a home larder. The cold storage section in the cellar kept carrots, turnip, squash, etc. very well. Lucky ones might have a barrel of apples, a side of venison, beef or pork and even cranberries picked at the bog. Fish was plentiful and cheap. Almost any day at the St. Stephen wharf you could purchase whole haddock, cod or pollock weighing up to several pounds for 25 or 35 cents. Then there was

The Policemen of Calais in the Early 20th Century

Sammy Saunders provides us with his humorous memories of the Calais police force in the early 20th century, featuring longtime Police Chief Bobby Kerr.

The way I recall, Scout Eye was the regular on the upper beat, Billy Mack was the regular on the lower beat, Ad Johnson was the regular at Milltown, and Bobby Kerr was the longtime Chief of Police. The others were spare or special officers, and George Cottrell was regular in Milltown after Johnson. Bobby Kerr (pronounced Carr, in Mudlane lingo) was Chief in Calais for a long time. He traded his Street Car Uniform in for the Police Uniform when the street cars went out. Many a Democrat had himself measured for the chief's uniform before elections, but nobody could upset Bobby.

When Tom Bridges ran for County Attorney, he decked his car out with new brooms and used the slogan, “A New Broom Sweeps Clean”, and the Democrats countered with, “Honest Tom and Crooked Bob”. Bobby was a favorite with the citizens of Calais. Whenever he got excited, or an emergency arose, his favorite words were, “Geesus, Geesus, Geesus”. He was no Dick Tracy but not many crimes went unsolved during Bobby’s tenure. He had good contacts, and solved many a crime. Bobby didn’t earn big wages, but he was a man who believed in Santa Claus, and thought that Santa came every Saturday night, via the Calais Merchants. He also had the concession of feeding the prisoners, and got free taxi service, so he made out pretty well and if he needed anything, he would spread the word, and usually someone would come up with it. One morning while Bobby was feeding his prisoners, there happened to be a young lady in one of the cells that had been detained overnight, and she said, “Bobby, I would like to have some Kotex.” Bobby replied, “You’ll have cornflakes, just like all the rest.”

We didn’t have dispatchers in those days, but the city had a very unique system. They had blue lights in strategic places, and when a call came into the fire station, they would snap on the lights, and an officer on the street would get to a phone, learn the cause of alarm, stop the first car along, and get to the scene of the crime pronto. It worked very well, and it was a hell of a lot cheaper than today.

Scout, Billy and Ad worked the night shift, and Bobby kept law and order during the day. On Saturday night Bobby worked and maybe a special or two. One would direct traffic at the Bank corner, while the others patrolled the Main Street. Cars would be going steady up North Street, across Lowell, down Monroe and down Main, looking for a chance to park in front of the chain stores. The smell of hot dogs and onions and of Louie’s peanuts filled the air, and Frank Beckett, Sr. was busy weighing out candy and breaking the Honey Sticks in two to give you honest measure. And during all this, these trusted officers were maintaining peace in the St. Croix Valley.



The Corner of North and Main Street. In the foreground, a “dummy cop” directs traffic. Signs for Trimbles, Western Union, and the St. Croix Hotel are visible.



The police officers of Calais, 1929. Police Chief Bobby Kerr is centered.

I think the funniest thing I can remember about Bobby Kerr was away back one busy Saturday forenoon. I was working at the Border Transportation Co., on lower North Street, where busses came in from Eastport, Woodland and Princeton. This was also Bobby’s regular hangout, and this morning he and I were looking out the big window and shooting the bull, and this lady came in and used the restroom. When she came out, our backs were to her, and when she got out the door, we could see that in her haste, somehow, she had tucked the

back of her dress inside of her bloomers. When Bobby saw what had happened he got all excited and shouted, "Geesus, Geesus, Geesus, Stop her, Stop her!", and at the same time went out the door, hollering, "Mrs.! Mrs.! Mrs.!". Well by the time he overtook her, they were in the middle of the intersection of North and Main and Bobby was talking to her, and at the same time trying to assist her and she was backing around and around in a circle, the traffic was held up, and some wise guy was laying on his horn, and by the time Bobby got her garments and the traffic straightened out, he was so flustered that he came back and bawled the hell out of me for letting it happen.

Connecting with the Society Online

The society maintains an increasingly popular online photo album on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/stcroixhs. Community members share their memories with each other on nearly every photograph (over 250 of which are now posted). Since the page was started in May, 543 people have become fans (67 percent of which are female), making it one of the larger Calais-based sites. Of that number, 148 continue to live in Calais. The most popular photo is this one of the Saint Croix Hotel in the 1950s, viewed by 2,335 people.



The society's website has recently been updated to a more modern format. The site will continue to undergo renovations with the goal of including historical information on the town, its buildings, and its people. Visit the site anytime at <http://stcroixhistorical.com/>.

Al sends out a weekly e-mail to a mailing list that anyone is welcome to join. Each week he features an interesting fact, relevant story, or intriguing photo for folks to enjoy. To sign up, send an e-mail to Al at jaclaw1@gmail.com.

Contact the SCHS:

Do you have questions about local history, suggestions for events or presentations, or comments or concerns regarding the newsletter? Let us know!

President: Al Churchill jaclaw1@gmail.com

Vice President and Assistant Editor: Jerry LaPointe

Treasurer: John Wood

Editor: Lura Jackson luraejackson@gmail.com

My Girl Friday: Fred Becker

New and Renewing Members from the Last Quarter

Louis and Marilyn Bernardini
Eunice Bothwick
Ben Brown
Eleanor Clark
Frank Foster, Jr.
Kenneth Halin
Lincoln Gayton
Bill Shain
Eugenia Townsend

Bill and Janice Bridgeo
Alan and Candice Dwelley
Jack Emack
Sandra Hill
Phil and Mavis Ross
Martha Beckett and Herm Gadway
John Churchill
James Knight
Mary Lewis

Leonard Picotte and Sandra
Whiteley
Jeff Robinson
Gloria Taylor
James and Judy Thompson
Mike Joseph
Geoff and Mary Mitchell
Fred Becker
Jerry LaPointe

The Society is supported through membership dues and donations. If you haven't yet paid your 2014 dues, please remember to do so. To make a donation via credit, debit, or Paypal, visit http://stcroixhistorical.com/?page_id=400 and click "Donate".

Financial Update

The checkbook balance is \$5,531.96. The savings account balance is \$1576.64. The value of the 100 shares of Qualcomm stock has increased to \$7644.00.

GIFT SUGGESTIONS:

Available by mail from SCHS, prices include postage

Note Cards:

**4 Views of St. Croix Island (8 cards & envelopes total) –
Paintings by Mary Livingstone - \$15**

Books:

Champlain's Journal - translated from French - \$8

"Washington County, Maine in the Civil War 1861-66" by Ken Ross - \$32

Ganong's, "Champlain's Island" - \$12

"Beginnings" (A reprint of the 1875 "Annals of Calais" by Rev. Knowlton) - \$16

"Pork, Molasses, & Timber" by Eaton - \$14

Around Town by Rail - \$11

Nellie's Diary - \$29

The Way We Were 1908 - \$19

Keene on Red Beach - \$29

Calais Fair 1914 - \$14

Ned's Valley - \$29

The Valley Cookbook - \$14

Charlie's Civil War - \$24

Calais Centennial - \$14

Picture Books:

"Calais 1896" - 52 views - \$8

"St. Andrews 1896" - 30 views - \$8

"Old Friends" - 49 old area photos - \$6

"Scenes of St. Stephen, 1895" - \$9

“Scenes of Campobello, Eastport, & Lubec, 1895” - \$10

Maps: Red Beach Birdseye view map, 11x17, laminated - \$15
Calais, St. Stephen, & Milltown Birdseye view map 1879, 11x17, laminated - \$15
Wharfs of Calais & St. Stephen map 1856, 11x17, laminated - \$15

DVD: Calais First Town Meeting Reenactment - \$19

Order at St. Croix Historical Society, P. O. Box 242, Calais, ME 04619

MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME

ADDRESS.....

CITY**STATE**.....

ZIP CODE **EMAIL**

If a gift membership, please include name and address to whom the gift membership goes.

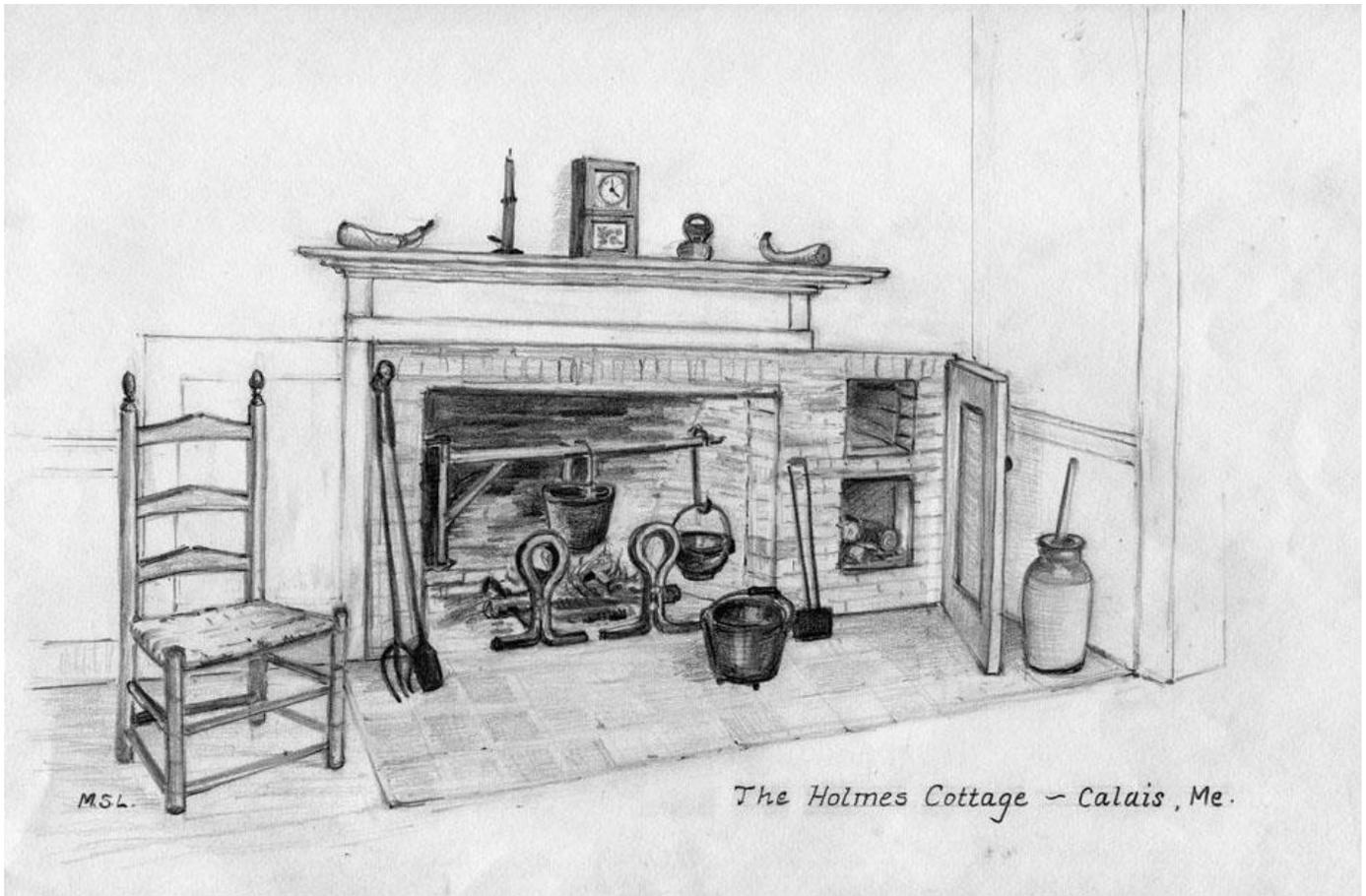
Amount Paid: _____ **2014** _____ **2015** _____

Please apply to: Regular _____ **Gift Membership** _____

Historian \$15
Family \$25
Supporting \$35
Corp/Bus \$60
Patron \$150 (includes one free 3 hour rental of Holmestead meeting room)
Life \$500

**Mail checks to: St. Croix Historical Society
PO Box 242
Calais, ME 04619**

We are a 501 (c) 3 tax deductible organization under IRS



Volume 23, Issue 3
St. Croix Historical Society
PO Box 242
Calais, ME 04619