

South Bristol Historical Society

Est. 1998

Newsletter

South Bristol, Maine 04568

207-644-1234 • sbhs@tidewater.net • www.southbristolhistoricalsociety.org

Volume 12 Number 2

Fall 2009

New SBHS Event in 2010: Historic House and Building Tour

Cathy Stockwell and Cynthia Garrels have begun preliminary planning for a tour of historical houses and buildings during August, 2010. This self-guided tour will include some locations where visitors may go inside and others with outside-only access. Needless to say, Warner's *A History of the Families and Their Houses: South Bristol, Maine* will be an important resource in designing the tour, but we need your help as well. If you have an older home in South Bristol with an interesting history or architectural features and would be willing to include it on the tour, or if there is a home or building of this type you would particularly like to see listed, please email SBHS@tidewater.net or call Cathy at 644-1253.

Winter Wednesdays

Please join us one or more "winter Wednesdays" at the SBHS building! Share a good time while working on some of the many tasks, small and large, that are critical to fulfilling the SBHS mission of making our town's history available to the community. Starting November 4, the SBHS museum/research center will be open from 1 to 3 pm on Wednesday afternoons - no reservations required, just stop by and stay as long as you can. No special skills needed, either, though a sense of humor helps!

News Notes

SBHS programs this past summer and fall were interesting and well-attended: close to 80 people came out to hear Stan Wells tell the story of why and how South Bristol separated from Bristol; another lively crowd enjoyed Gladden Schrock's entertaining and insightful memories and stories about South Bristol fishing and fishermen; the Christmas Cove Casino was the setting when marine artist Loretta Krupinski described to a large and appreciative audience how she brings new life to historic waterfront scenes in her award-winning oil paintings. A special Open House at the SBHS museum was held in August so that members and friends could see the bright "new" interior, repainted by SBHS volunteers including Cathy Stockwell, Cotton Damon, Nat Hammond, Carolyn McKeon and Donna Plummer following the Town's installation of a sorely-needed new roof. Replacement of the damaged carpet provided an opportunity to re-arrange display shelves and update exhibits, much enjoyed by the visitors. Finally, in October Dave Andrews presented an excellent summa-

ry of the history of schools and schooling in South Bristol. "The Case of the Moving School" which appears on the next page is a small sample of what he learned.

The SBHS building was once again open twice a week during the summer, thanks to Cynthia Garrels and Charles Beaudette with help from time to time from Thelma House and Donna Plummer.

Please welcome new trustees Cynthia Garrels and Charles Beaudette, elected at our Annual Meeting in July. Re-elected at the same meeting were officers Ellen Wells, Nat Hammond, Michele Christensen, Cotton Damon, and David Andrews. Continuing as Trustees are Eugenie Cole, Bill Kelsey, Gail Seiders, Larry Kelsey, Charles Plummer, Carolyn McKeon, Donna Plummer, and Cathy Stockwell.

Sincere thanks to our new life members Charles and Kate Beaudette for their most welcome support. We appreciate the support of all our members, and hope that those of you who have not yet paid dues for the 2009-10 year will take this opportunity to clip the membership form that appears on the back of this newsletter and send it along with your check. **Please take note of your address on this mailing - if your name is circled in red, our records indicate that we have not received your dues payment.**

It is with great sadness that we report that Gordon Claar, a founding member of SBHS and its Vice President for many years, died on October 2, 2009. Gordon's patient good humor, practical advice and commitment to helping SBHS succeed will be sorely missed.



Be sure to take a look at the new cemetery signs provided by SBHS for the Main Cemetery and the Island Cemetery.

Special S Road School Photo Section - See pages 3 - 5

The Case of the Moving School

By Dave Andrews

In the early days of public education in South Bristol, when the farms were few and far between and travel was difficult, “moving schools” were not unusual. The school master would teach a term at one end of the town and then move to another part of town and teach another term; thus, the “moving school.”

This, however, is the tale of a different type of moving school - the S Road School building of the mid-1800s. Called the Neck, Main or Roosevelt School, the District 5 school building is clearly marked on an 1857 map of South Bristol. Located between the houses of Asa Thompson and Thomas Thompson, the building was northeast of the intersection of today’s McFarland Cove Road and Route 129.

“A school building in very poor condition,” the Bristol (we were part of Bristol back then) school committee reported at the time. Finding that unacceptable, the families of District 5 rallied round and erected a new school house in 1860 at the cost \$600. That building is the structure the SBHS has recently restored (see photo section). In *A History of the Families and Their Houses- South Bristol, Maine*, H. Landon Warner said the school was moved sometime after it was built, probably echoing what he had heard from town elders. This has been taken to mean the new building was moved from the McFarland Cove Road to where it sits today. But did it really move?

Deeds obtained from Town Hall and others I have unearthed provide some answers to this question. In the spring of 1861, Thomas Cavis Jr. deeded the western half of a school house lot to District 5. In 1862, Asa Thompson deeded the eastern half. Both deeds mention the new school. Cavis’ deed clearly shows that the building sat

squarely in the middle of the “old road to Rutherford Island”. The deed also mentions the Neck Road, the road we now call the S Road, as being located north of the school by some 50 feet or more. A stone wall along the entire west side of the lot is also mentioned. Thompson’s deed refers to the road and to a stone wall along the east side of the lot. Further digging in the Registry of Deed shows that the line between Cavis and Thompson was roughly along current Route 129 but Cavis’ did not go as far north as McFarland Cove Road. A little rooting around in Town records found that the old road to Rutherford Island was abandoned in 1857, and that there was no summer school term in 1860 but there was a winter term (1860/1861).

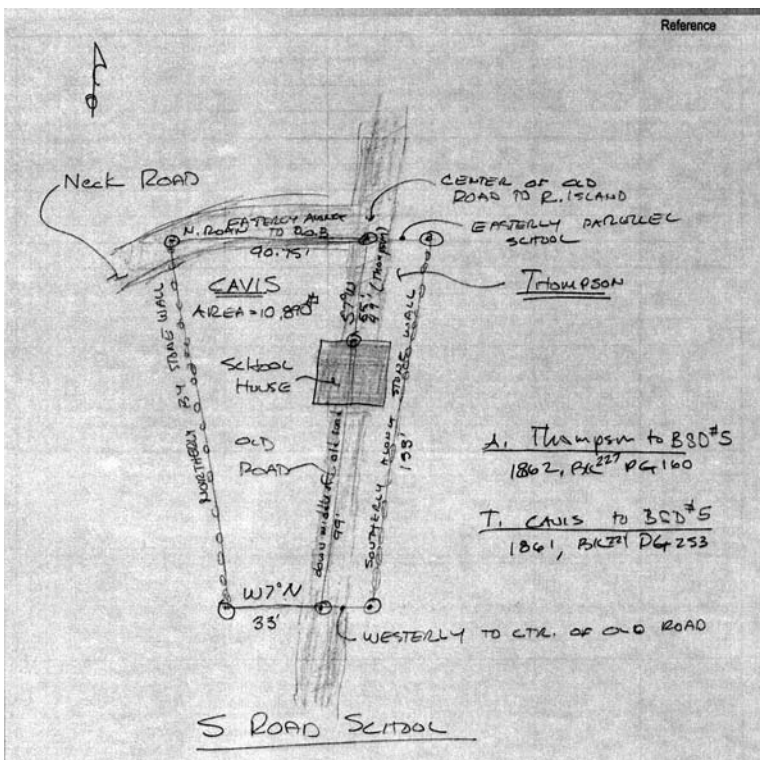
So much for the facts. Now for conjecture and questions. It is difficult to imagine that the 1860 school building would have been moved the year after it was built, especially with school in session, so I think we can assume the building was constructed somewhere close to where it is now, on the site made available by the abandonment of the old road. Where was that old road to Rutherford Island anyway? How do you explain the S Road being north of the school? Why are the school’s doors on the south side facing today’s S Road, if the S Road was north of the school when it was first built?

The simple answer to all these questions is that I don’t know. I do know that roads are one of the least stable elements of town history. They are on the move all the time. Most of us can remember the “old” Route 129. I know that on the ridge to the east of today’s Route 129, from the village to the ice house, one can see the remains of a road.

Could this be the “new” Rutherford Island road of 1857? I know it was nothing for folks in those days to move buildings around or turn buildings around for that matter. In fact, it was a common occurrence. I know that if the S Road building was much further south than it is now, it would have been in a low spot.

Here is what I think happened. Warner is correct that the “school” moved but, like the 18th century “moving school,” it was the students and the schoolmaster that moved, not the building. I think the building sits on its original 1860 foundation. I think the S Road was north of the building in 1860 but was moved south of the building at a later, unrecorded date when the “old road to Rutherford Island” was put back into service. (This might be around 1915 when cars started to be popular.) I think they turned the school around when that happened... of course, I might be wrong.

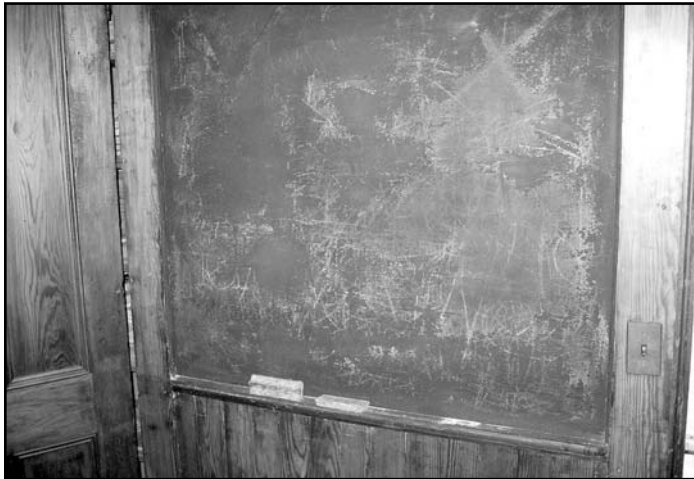
And no letters, please, about how the S Road couldn’t have been north of the school because there is a pond in the way. The pond is a fire pond dating, I think, from the 1940s. There I go thinking again!



S Road School

October was a most exciting month for everyone who has worked so hard on bringing the S Road School back to life. First, on October 3, the doors were open for a preview of how everything would look when all we planned was complete, and over fifty people braved truly miserable weather to stop by, including seven “alumni” of the school. Then, on October 23, the first “new” students arrived – Mrs. Sara Nichols’ first and second graders from the South Bristol School walked to school right after lunch and settled in (well, at least sat down) for their lessons with teacher Donna Plummer, using the very same desks and books children of the 1930’s had used in that very same school house. It was a special day, the culmination in many ways of almost four years of effort from a multitude of people. There is not enough space here to thank everyone, but for now, special appreciation goes to Donna Plummer, Restoration Fund Chairman for all her time and, most importantly, her inspiring enthusiasm; to Nat Hammond, furnishings chairman for his determined search for desks literally all over the

country; to Ann Sears whose advice meant so much to our fund raising efforts; to contractor Kenneth Lincoln whose commitment to the historical imperatives of the project led him to go beyond the normal requirements of his job; to each and every individual and foundation who contributed the funds to make it happen; and to the Town of South Bristol for its steady support. The images that follow give just a hint at what had to be done and what was accomplished.



Above: A blackboard in poor shape.

Below: Signs of trouble under the building as reconstruction gets underway.



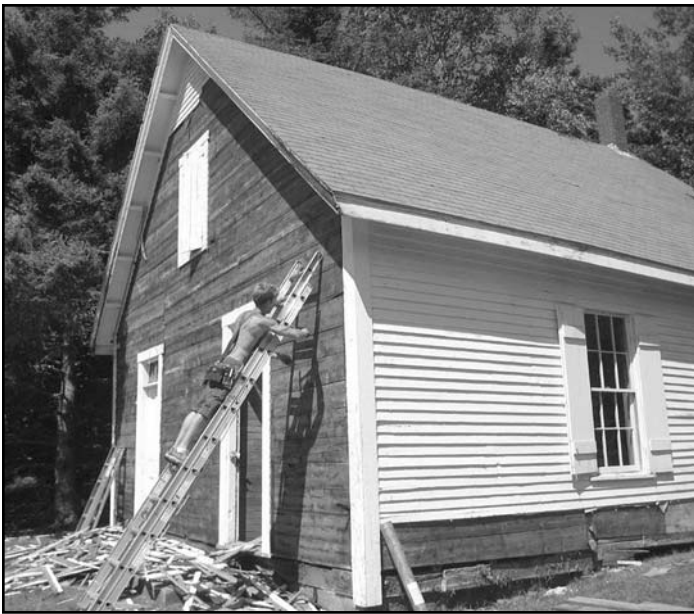
Above: The S Road School as it looked in 2005.

Right: Inside the school, spring 2005.



Below: Getting ready for a solid, level floor.





Down to the original wood siding.



South Bristol 8th Graders lend a hand inside...



Privy rebuild gets started...



...and outside!



...and is almost finished.



SBHS members apply finishing touches.



The S Road School, October 2009



The first "new" students are on their way!



Teacher's books and lessons are ready.



Their day starts with a pledge to the flag.



Desks are in place.



Everyone listens carefully.



Alumni try out their old desks at the October 3, 2009, Open House.



Teacher Plummer hands out assignments.

South Bristol Historical Society
2124 State Route 129
PO Box 229
South Bristol, ME 04568

Join the South Bristol Historical Society

Date _____

Please print

Name: _____

Winter Address: _____

Town _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Winter phone (____) _____

Summer Address: _____

Town _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Summer phone (____) _____

E-mail _____@_____

Membership Categories: Please check one

Annual

- Individual \$10.00
- Couple/family \$20.00
- Sustaining (Individual or Couple/family) \$40.00
- Contribution \$_____

Life

- Individual \$250.00
- Couple/family \$350.00

Please mail form and check to: SBHS, PO Box 229, South Bristol, ME 04568