

# South Bristol Historical Society

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## Newsletter

South Bristol, Maine 04568

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### Historical Society News

Get out your address book and make a new entry:

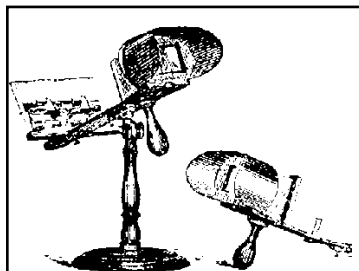
SBHS – 207-644-1234; email [SBHS@tidewater.net](mailto:SBHS@tidewater.net).

Yes, we now have a phone, with answering machine, and access to the internet. We hope that these “modern” conveniences will encourage greater use of our resources by the community and help us to better serve the town and its history. Many thanks to Bill Glendinning and Gordon Claar for getting the system up and running.

“Winter Afternoon Workshops” were such a success that they are being continued as “**Spring Afternoon Workshops**” in April, for as many weeks as there are willing workers. Six or seven hardy souls turned up at SBHS on a number of wintry Thursday afternoons from 1 to 3 pm, clipping newspaper articles and obituaries, organizing photos and putting them into protective sleeves, cataloguing books and artifacts. Much progress has been made and a good time enjoyed by Rom and Betty Humphries, Yvonne Chapman, Kathy Norwood, Genie Cole, Barbara Pitcher, Cotton Damon, Donna Plummer, Gail Seiders, Gordon Claar, Nat Hammond, Carolyn McKeon and Fran Hewins. Many thanks to all, and come join us in April!

Among the recent additions to the SBHS **local history collection** are copies of a set of stereo photos of Clark’s Cove scenes, including ice cutting on the pond, designed to be viewed in a **stereopticon**. This one-of-a-kind treasure was found by Dirk and Linda Brunner in their Clark’s Cove home and shared with SBHS historian Dave Andrews. **Other interesting items** recently received from generous members and friends include a large group of photographs, received by SBHS Vice President Gordon Claar from Ann Stratton not too long before her death, which provide a wonderful chronicle of the Stratton family’s summers here; a classic metal milk bottle carrier and six glass milk bottles from local dairies came from Gail and Frances Seiders; Bill Kelsey gave an elaborately decorated

paper fan inscribed on the back with “A. H. Farrin—Groceries, Candy, Ice Cream and Cigars South Bristol, Maine”; Donna Plummer added the Lincoln High School 1931 yearbook and the 1957 “Islander” yearbook to our collection; Jean Case sent 1907 and 1930 editions of the Rutherford



Anyone have an old-fashioned stereopticon to donate to SBHS?

Cookbook; the town’s origins are recorded in a typed carbon copy of the warrant for the first town meeting on December 15, 1915, with original signatures of Town Clerk Everett Poole and others, in its original envelope inscribed by Mr. Poole, donated by Larry Kelsey along with two large voter registration books covering the period of 1926 to about 1946, one listing Republicans and the other Democrats. SBHS is grateful for these donations and for every document and artifact entrusted to its care and will continue to do its utmost to preserve and display these reminders of our town’s people and its institutions.

### South Bristol History Reading List

*Prepared by Dave Andrews, SBHS Historian*

Recently, I was asked for a good book on the history of South Bristol. While there is no single comprehensive history of our town, I was surprised by the number of good references I identified when I sat down and drew up a list in response to the request. Here’s the list:

*Old Bristol and Nobleboro, Maine Vital Records, Vol. 1, Birth and Deaths* edited by Christine Huston Dodge, (Maine Historical Society, 1951). Anyone truly interested in South Bristol history must have a well-thumbed version of “Dodge.” A genealogical jewel, this book is one of the most significant of our local history references. Because family connections are critical to understanding our history, having these records in one book saves an enormous amount of research effort. The book has much information on our town beyond just genealogy. At SBHS and the Rutherford Library.

*The History of the Families and Their Houses*, by H. Landon Warner, (unpublished, c. 1986). Warner’s work is probably the closest we have to a true history of South Bristol. Landon Warner was a professor at Kenyon College and, while his initial focus was on the architecture found in the Town, he couldn’t help but gather much more history. His research on the deeds of early property is particularly outstanding. His work consists of a history of the older houses in Town and their owners as well as eight separate, more detailed and up-to-date, write-ups of some areas – Christmas Cove, West Side Road, Miles Road, Thompson Inn Road, Shipyard Road, Inner Heron Island, McFarland Cove and the S Road. SBHS is working toward getting this important document published. Until that happens, Warner’s complete work is available at SBHS and parts are also at the Rutherford library.

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## South Bristol History Reading List cont'd fr. p. 1

*The Pemaquid Peninsula of Maine, A Study of Economic and Community Development 1815-1915*, Joshua Hanna (unpublished, 1994). This is an unpublished, well-written, honors thesis (Dartmouth College) by Joshua Hanna who has since become a college history professor. His study covers the entire Bristol peninsula but has much very interesting information on South Bristol. He has done a good job of summarizing the change in the economic life of the Town. It is a very readable and informative work. A copy is available at the Rutherford Library.

*The History of Bristol and Bremen in the State of Maine including the Pemaquid Settlement*, John Johnston LLD, (reprinted by the Bremen Library Association, 1873). The early history of the Bristol Peninsula is covered in depth by Johnston in this classic Town History from the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A bit heavy going at times, Johnston still provides us with much information. The book suffers from a lack of focus, particularly toward the latter part of the book, as he approaches his current times. No pictures, of course. This book has been republished by the Bremen Library. Johnston's original notes, which comprise nearly a file drawer of paper, are in the Maine Historical Society archives. The book is in the Rutherford Library and for sale at the bookstore in Damariscotta.

*A Short History of South Bristol*, Nelson W. Gamage (reprinted Union Church, c. 1925). This little booklet, which contains anecdotes, stories, genealogy and lists related specifically to South Bristol, is written by one of South Bristol's most prominent citizens of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The booklet was probably based on a long interview with Nelson Gamage published in the Lewiston Sun Journal in 1920. While Gamage repeats some history from Johnston and gets his list of South Bristol boats from a more extensive list by Sidelinger (a deputy commissioner for registering boats in Damariscotta in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), he has much to offer when it comes to interesting stories. He also helps sort out the early South Bristol from Bristol. It is available at the Rutherford Library and at SBHS.

*The Town Register, Damariscotta, Newcastle, Bristol, Bremen and Muscongus Island, 1906*, published by Mitchell, Daggett, Sawyer and Lawter. This rather rare book is a census of the people in the listed Towns. Each family is named and the employment of each person noted. This may seem rather dull but the after a little study, turns out to be fascinating. I have a copy of this book, as does the Skidompha Library.

*Charlie York, Maine Coast Fisherman*, a biography by Harold Clifford (International Marine Publishing, 1974). York was the quintessential local fisherman of the first  
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## 2005 PROGRAM SCHEDULE

*Please note some new days and places*

SATURDAY, April 30 – 9:00 am at the UNION CHAPEL, Walpole. **Larry Kelsey** will share his research on the **West Bristol Cemetery** and lead a visit to the cemetery. This is the largest cemetery in South Bristol and the source of much historical and genealogical information. Coffee, tea and pastries will be served.

THURSDAY, May 19 – 7:30 pm at the RUTHERFORD LIBRARY. **Mark DesMueles**, Executive Director of the Damariscotta River Association, will present slides and information tracing the **history of conservation** efforts in the Damariscotta River area.

THURSDAY, June 16 – 7:30 pm at the RUTHERFORD LIBRARY. Author **Mark Biscoe** will tell the tale of **shipbuilding** on the **Damariscotta River**, drawing from his book *No Pluckier Set of Men Anywhere: The Story of Ships and Men in Damariscotta and Newcastle, Maine*.

SUNDAY, July 3 – **Thompson Ice House Ice Cream Social**

WEDNESDAY, July 20 – 7:00 pm **Annual Meeting & election of trustees and officers**; 7:30 **Program** at the UNION CHURCH MEETING ROOM. **Neil Rolde**, author of the recently published *Unsettled Past, Unsettled Future; the Story of Maine Indians*, will be the featured speaker. A former legislator and longtime historian, Neil Rolde is also the author of *The Interrupted Forest: A History of Maine's Wildlands*; *An Illustrated History of Maine*; *So You Think You Know Maine*; and other books.

MONDAY, August 15 – 7:30 pm at the RUTHERFORD LIBRARY. **Margot Sullivan**, active in Monhegan Associates and the Historical and Cultural Museum will speak on the **history of Monhegan Island**, including slides and delightful excerpts from letters written by her grandmother when she ran a tea room there in the 20's, as well as a look at the challenges faced by the Island and its residents today.

THURSDAY, September 15 – 7:30 pm at the RUTHERFORD LIBRARY. **Dave Andrews** will help us get to know the late **Ann Stratton** and her family through letters, photos, and the memories of South Bristol residents. As South Bristol residents know, Ms. Stratton expressed her love for South Bristol in tangible terms by leaving the Town \$9 million in her will.

THURSDAY, October 20 – 7:30 pm at the RUTHERFORD LIBRARY. It's **movie night** at SBHS with a selection of home movies made in South Bristol, some from the 20's and 30's, some a bit more recent. Watch the newspapers and posters around town for details.

decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He lived in Harpswell and Boothbay Harbor but fished with Henry Jones out of South Bristol toward the end of his career. A wonderful picture of what it was like on the midcoast of Maine at that time. The book is now out of print; I have a copy.

*Down on the Island Up on the Maine A Recollected History of South Bristol*, by Ellen Vincent (SBHS and Tilbury House, 2003). In my opinion, one of the finest examples of oral history in the written form with wonderful pictures of our town; what more can I say. Anecdotes and town history told in the voices of the people whose knowledge is first hand. *Down on the Island Up on the Maine* is really a family photo album for the whole town. On sale at SBHS and in bookstores.

*Woodstoves & Backhouses, Schoolhouses of Bristol, Maine 1800-2000*, by Philip Avery (self published, 2001). This small booklet is what local history research is all about. Phil has done a great job of collecting the history of the schools in Bristol and South Bristol. At SBHS.

*The Christmas Cove Improvement Association 1900-2000 – A Centennial History*, by Stan & Ellen Wells (CCIA, 2000). Loaded with photographs, this book tells the history of the CCIA from its beginning. The story of the CCIA offers insight into the growth, changes and culture of South Bristol's summer colony. Read or purchase at SBHS; on sale at the CCIA.

*A Steamboat Named Sabino*, by George King III (Mystic Seaport, 1999). The steamboat "Sabino" is the last coal-fired passenger vessel in the United States. Located at Mystic Seaport, she is now a national treasure. "Sabino"

started life as work-a-day boat of the Damariscotta Steamboat Company. The steamboat line was started by a South Bristol native and its home port was here. George King devotes much of his book to the early history of the steamboat line. At SBHS and on sale at bookstores.

*Lost With All Hands – A Family Forever Changed, The Portland Gale of 1888*, by Mary Melton (Penobscot Press, 1998). This novel is set in Walpole and concerns itself with the trials and tribulations of the local families. While a fictional account, the book appears to be well researched and provides a glimpse into everyday life of the period. At SBHS.

*Hodgdon Shipbuilding and Mills – A Documentary History of the First Hundred Years* (Winnegance Press, 1995) and *Colonial Boothbay Mid-1600 to 1775* (Winnegance Press, 2000), both by Barbara Rumsey. Barbara is the executive director of the Boothbay Region Historical Society and a scholar of local history, especially the early colonial time. These two books, while not directly about South Bristol, have much to offer. The Damariscotta River was not viewed as a barrier in the past. Rather it served as a connector between South Bristol and the Boothbays. Barbara's meticulous research and her knitting together the threads of local family history make both these books very interesting. Two other books, *Boothbay Region History Sketches, Volume I* (1995) and *Volume II* (1990), edited by Barbara Rumsey, will also be of interest to South Bristol history buffs. The "Colonial Boothbay" is at SBHS; both are on sale at bookstores.

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## THE SPROUL HOMESTEAD

*The Sproul Homestead is one of four South Bristol properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The others are the Thompson Ice House, the Emily Mears house (Birch Island), and the Walpole Meetinghouse. What follows is the "nomination form" submitted in 1978 which was the basis for its inclusion in the Register.*

**The Sproul Homestead in South Bristol** consists of an early Colonial cape style house (1749) which serves as an ell to a fine Federal residence of 1815 which was moved from across the road and joined to it in 1833.



*The Sproul Homestead on Rte. 129: two-story Federal main house (1815) attached in 1833 to center chimney Cape (1749) at the rear.*

The main part of the house consists of a 2-story frame building with two internal chimneys, clapboarded facade (shingled sides), granite foundation, and low hipped roof. In plan the house is rectangular and is of central hall layout. The facade is 5 bays wide, with 6/6 windows in the second story (as elsewhere) and 1/1 in the first (one of the few recent alterations to the house). The central entrance is a paneled door flanked by Doric pilasters with entablatured lintel above a recessed transom of four lights.

The shingled side walls of the main part of the house are two bays wide and, as on the façade, the windows are framed by delicate moldings.

Running to the west from the rear of the main part of the house is a center chimney Cape style house (1749) which was attached to the house in 1833 to function as an ell. This Cape has clapboarded front and rear and a shingled west end. Its windows, where original, are 9/6; a 4/4 is present in the west end

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and a 1/1 and bay window with 1/1 of the Italianate period are to the right (east) of the central doorway of the original facade. The doorway is simply framed with four-light transom. A shed type dormer containing two 8/8 windows protrudes from the roof above the bay window; old photographs show two gabled dormers here and this alteration was made in 1961. The rear of the Cape, which faces north, contains a pair of central 8/8 windows.

Extending northward from the junction of the Federal and Colonial elements (house and ell) is a frame clapboarded structure with shed roof and details compatible with the other elements. Its principle facade, two bays wide, faces east and contains on each of 2 stories a pair of 6/6' windows. A rear entrance and 8/8 window face north in the one-story back of the addition.

Internally the various components are very well preserved, whether Colonial, Federal, or late Federal. Particularly fine are the restrained Federal mantelpieces, wainscoting and friezes in the main part of the house. The earlier part of the house contains an unchanged pine paneled room with corner cupboard, some stenciling and original hardware.

The Sproul Homestead is a very fine example of a farm containing mid-18th-century and early 19th-century elements. Evidently it has been well cared for by various gen-

erations of owners, and recent alterations have been discreet.

Although the principal significance of the Sproul Homestead lies in its interesting and well preserved combination of mid-18th century and Federal architecture, it is also noteworthy in its connection with one of the earliest and most numerous families in the region.

The progenitor of this large clan was James Sproul, born in Ireland near Belfast who came to Boston in 1727. In 1729 he arrived at Pemaquid with Col. David Dunbar who built Fort Frederick, the last of a series of forts built on the site of the original trading post of 1630.

James' eldest son, Robert, also born in Ireland in 1716, built in 1749 the original Colonial cape in the Walpole section of South Bristol which was later occupied by his third son William, born in 1762. The impressive Federal house of 1815 was built by William's eldest son, Robert, on his father's land but on the east side of the road leading to South Bristol. After the death of his father he moved the structure in 1933 to the higher land on the west side of the road and attached it to the older house in the manner in which it now stands.

These two Sproul family homes joined as one provide not only an interesting architectural mixture but also close ties with two early generations of probably the largest family in the region.