

VANCEBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Original painting by Donna Beach Wright

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

This has been a year worth celebrating: a museum grand re-opening, nonprofit status, a grant from the Maine Community Foundation, new members, a rich array of donations, and now our first newsletter as a reinvigorated organization!

December also brought news of a grant from the Morton Kelly Foundation, for which we are also very grateful!

From our hearts to yours, enjoy some of our favorite moments, stories and photographs of a magical year!



It Takes a Village: Celebrating 150 Years and a New VHS

No one knows better than Vanceboro folks how things come and go. And no one knows more about hard work and a fresh start. We are the second go at a Vanceboro Historical Society, following the hard work of our predecessors who amassed a collection, repurposed an old gas station, began a newsletter, built a healthy membership, then had to pack it all up when the building sold.

Our fresh start began in June, 2023 when nearly 40 of us made our way to the former elementary school, now the Vanceboro Community Center, to reimagine and plan. We elected a Board of Directors, a slate of officers. Danny Beers, president of the first VHS became ours as well. Soon after, the town leadership offered us free museum space in the Center and we gratefully moved in. We applied for nonprofit status, created a website, began researching and writing and building displays.

Remote rural historical societies are a lot like remote rural schools. Everyone does a bit of everything, broadband is a necessity, and community support essential. Board member Mary McAleney and selectwoman Cheryl Monk Long forged a close partnership and, with the support of Sunrise County Economic Council, began the work to fund a new roof, purchase heat

pumps, access high speed internet. Board Treasurer Donna, who also runs the Rec Program, initiated a stream of events and activities in the refreshed space. Cribbage tournaments, bingo nights, holiday parties, and community dinners brought residents from both sides of the border back to town.

When Cheryl alerted us to Vanceboro's 150th anniversary that fall, we began to imagine a town celebration that included our museum's grand opening. We applied for a grant from the Maine Community Foundation. Danny opened the letter during our early June 2024 Board meeting. We held our breath and then cheered! With the support of the Belvedere Historic Preservation Fund, we had our funds.

We had less than two months.

Donna and her sisters, Betty and Diana, led the cleaning crew, and took on the huge task of preparing the building, polishing floors, painting foyers and bathrooms. Faye and Alaine sorted our holdings. Dorothy conducted research. Alaine, Lyn, Mark, and intern, Enzo, built displays. Danny designed and ordered t-shirts. Teresa set menus and called in favors. We put up shades, washed windows, ordered cups and plates, bunting and banners and programs. We reached out to state and local politicians, invited local historical societies, listed our celebration in newspapers and public calendars.

Vanceboro has a long tradition: no life event – no birth, no marriage, no death, no calamity or blessing happens without a community get-together, the arrival of friends and neighbors, the offering of food and, when necessary, the passing of a hat. People arrive at your door. Love settles in, makes itself at home, does what needs doing.

Community offerings began arriving days before the celebration. Curtis Scott, the fire chief, delivered tables and chairs. A crew showed up to spray wash the building, mow the lawn and adjacent fields. People tidied their yards, put buntings on their houses. Announcements and directional signs popped up around town, on trees and rocks and buildings.

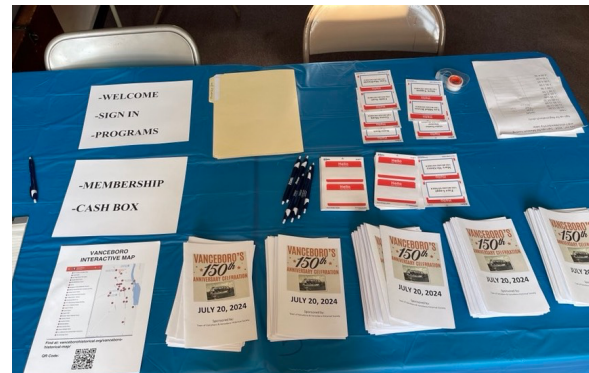
The early morning of the celebration, folks showed up with ropes and stakes to create a green carpeted parking lot. A large sign appeared: “Vanceboro Community Center: Municipal Offices, Vanceboro Historical Society.” Townspeople arrived with their offerings of food. Picnic tables materialized, a line of grills. The Smith sisters took over the kitchen. A collection of family crockpots filled with baked beans, chili, and meat balls greeted a line of casseroles and salads, homemade rolls and desserts. Brenda Smith-Houlberg and Andrea Fisher readied their cameras to document the day.

Over 200 arrived. Entire families, some representing four generations, sat at long tables decorated with little vases of sunflowers. They found old friends, reconnected and reminisced. Grandchildren and great grandchildren of railroad workers, town nurses, teachers and baseball players, store owners, customs and immigration officers, hotel and restaurant proprietors, river drivers, woodsmen, farmers, inventors. People who love this

town, who live here still, if only in their hearts and memories. Secretary of State, Shenna Bellows, presented the town with a copy of the original incorporation papers. Edie Smith, representing Angus King, bestowed a flag flown over the nation’s capital. When veterans gathered to raise the flag, there wasn’t a dry eye.

The program and lunch over, visitors toured the museum’s 24 unique displays, engaging with the social and material history of their family’s past: a river driving pick pole, a doctor’s blood pressure kit, 1920s brass tubas, a mail hoop, an Armstrong “three bagger” baseball bat made just down the road. They saw photographs of their houses then and now, saw lumber camp tools, followed the evolution of the station and railyard. In the end, there was a spontaneous dance party.

Truly, it takes a village. Thanks to all who showed up to help. Thanks to all who traveled back home to celebrate this historical moment. Please stay in touch!



Vanceboro's 150th Celebration in Pictures



Selectpersons Cheryl Monk Long and Corinna Cropley welcome attendees; Secretary of State Shenna Bellows presents Vanceboro with a framed copy of the town's incorporation papers; Edie Smith, on behalf of Senator Angus King, presents a flag flown over the nation's capital.



Alaine Peaslee-Hinshaw (left) speaks of Vanceboro past, present and future; Danny Beers shares the history of the Vanceboro Historical Society, introduces the Board, and opens the museum.



VHS Board members, from left to right: Danny Beers (President), Alaine Peaslee-Hinshaw (Corresponding Secretary), Faye Luppi, Cindy Scott (Vice President), Lyn Mikel Brown, Dorothy Amero Cummings, Mark Tappan (Recording Secretary), Mary McAleney, Teresa Monk, Donna Beach Wright (Treasurer), Gene MacDonald, Brenda Smith-Houlberg





Left: Veterans, Holly Beers, Richard Monk and Scott Wilkie raise the flag; Above: Veterans and dignitaries, back row: Vanceboro Selectperson Corinna Cropley, Maine State Senator Marianne Moore, Scott Wilkie, Vanceboro Selectperson Cheryl Monk Long, Larry Beers. David Beers, Joan Farnham, Richard Monk, Billy Grass, Harvey Day, Angus King representative, Edie Smith, Otis Dyer. Front row: Holly Beers, Gene McDonald.

Thank you, Gene MacDonald!

VHS board member Gene MacDonald has generously donated his small railroad museum and its contents, along with the railroad signal and “put-put” railcar currently displayed beside the building. The town has given us permission to relocate the building, signal and railcar to an area adjacent to the current museum. Our goal is to raise funds to renovate the building as a three season museum space that will house an interactive railroad display. Just before we finished this edition, we received a check from Morton-Kelly Charitable Fund to support the move and exterior and interior renovation. We are thrilled.

Our goal is to share the unique and historically important history of the transcontinental railroad and the role Vanceboro played. Please consider a donation to this new project. We will need additional funds to support the interactive displays.



Our current railroad display, above, includes select pieces from the MacDonald collection.

The new building and outdoor display will allow for a full interactive experience.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Alaine Peaslee-Hinshaw

Tell us about yourself and your connection to Vanceboro?

I grew up in Washington, DC. I was an art teacher at a Friends' School in Iowa, a private school in St. Louis, and another Friends' school in Ohio. I live in Vanceboro, Maine full time now. My family has been summer residents at the cabin we built ourselves on Spednic Lake since 1965. The woods and waters of Vanceboro are very special to me and are central to what brings me joy. My husband, Christopher, and I decided there was no place else we would rather be, so we relocated to Vanceboro to "rewire" as homesteaders and to eventually retire here.

You're on the Board of the Vanceboro Historical Society?

Yes, I am the collection curator, Corresponding Secretary, and a member of the Display & Program Committee. Many hats.

What do you love about the work?

I love the old family albums that show people, women in particular, in neck-to-toe fashions of the time, outside, reveling in the beauty of the natural environment here. Life was so hard and yet there was joy in the simple pleasures of the woods and the waters. It's not what you're asking really, but I'm drawn to the deep roots, the stories, those eerie coincidences that give a place and a collection meaning

In 2018, Christopher and I bought a house and seven acres of land on the inner edge of town. We named our homestead Wild Field Farm. The house, an *Aladdin Kit Home*, was shipped here from Michigan in parts on the railroad in 1931 and assembled by George Thayer Holbrook, the great

nephew of one of the town's earliest residents.

It turns out that among the many endeavors undertaken by the Holbrook family during their long years in Vanceboro were two large farms south of town, where they raised crops and a large herd of pure-bred cattle. The Holbrook family loved spending time on their land—what they referred to as their "homestead"—which stretched from the town center all the way down Farm Road to the river and a clearing across from Wingdam Island. When creating a Holbrook family display for the Historical Society museum, I discovered an album with photos of the family's favorite picnic spot, "Holbrook Grove," on the river bank across from the island.



The old road through the woods to Wingdam is our favorite walk! Their favorite picnic spot on the river bank across from Wingdam is our favorite spot! I was inspired to recreate one of the Holbrook photos. I posed a friend, myself and my dog in a similar spot to where Agnes and George may have stood along the pathway to the picnic area. My friend's

daughter took the picture. I love the way the past and the present blur in these photos! It feels like a ghost story to me. Holbrooks, Hinshaws...all loving the simple joy of the same woods and water.



Agnes and G.T. Holbrook on the path to their favorite picnic spot, early 1900s.



Alaine Peaslee-Hinshaw, Inka, and Sara Cameli in the same spot, 2024.

Vanceboro Historical Society Cookbook FOR SALE!

Vanceboro Historical Society

*150th Anniversary
Cookbook*



Imagine a cookbook full of recipes that remind you of home. Think bean hole beans baked on the river drives, thick molasses cookies packed in railroad workers' lunch boxes, fish chowders eaten on cool spring evenings up lake.

Each recipe has a photograph and a story. Each purchase will help support the Vanceboro Historical Society Museum and our work to collect, preserve, and display our cultural heritage.

To order for copies for yourself and those you love go to the cookbook page on the VHS website (<https://vanceborohistorical.org/vanceboro-historical-society-cookbook-for-sale/>) or order direct (https://createmycookbook.com/products/593744_592530_R)

Order now for Christmas; delivery may take 2-4 weeks.

New Additions to the VHS Museum

We were thrilled when Carol Buchanan donated this 1920's quilt to the museum on the day of the 150th celebration. Her mother-in-law, Georgia Gallison Buchanan, won the quilt in a raffle. Made by the Ladies Methodist Church Guild, each handcrafted square represents a Guild member. Carol's late husband, George Buchanan, lived with his family on High Street between Tague's house and Crandlemire's.



A Call for Contributions

Vanceboro has a rich history of stories and legends, many carried forward to this day in poems and songs sung in the woods and along river drives. The tragic drowning of a beloved father, the death of a young woodsman in a fistfight, a baby thrown from a train as it crossed the trestle bridge, found and buried by loggers. We are building a collection we're calling Stories, Legends, Tales & Tragedies. If you have or know of stories or photos we should include in such a collection, please let us know!

And, if you have historical photographs, books, artifacts, papers or records to donate, please go to our website home page <https://vanceborohistorical.org/> and download a donation form or simply email our curator, Alaine Peaslee-Hinshaw at alainepeasleehinshaw@gmail.com

Questions and Queries

We sometimes field questions from people looking for family members.

Helen Smith is looking for a connection between the Danforth, Maine William Robinson family, his wife, Mary Blanche Mushero (or Mushroe) Agnew Robinson Lee (3 husbands), and the adoption of her son, Fred Robinson, by Samuel & Elizabeth Orr of Vanceboro. Please reach out to Alaine if you have information to share.



VHS Museum Displays



Thank you to Brenda Smith-Houlberg, Andrea Fisher, and Mark Tappan for taking the photos featured in this newsletter.

Please support us!

VHS is supported through membership dues and donations, which are tax-deductible. To make a donation, please use our secure online system at: <https://vanceborohistorical.org/> and click “Donate” or mail a check to Vanceboro Historical Society, Box 48, Vanceboro, ME 04491. *Any donation of \$25.00 or more will count toward an annual membership*



P.O. Box 48
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