



VANCEBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Original painting by Donna Beach Wright

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

As the holidays approach, we celebrate all who have made it possible to grow our museum and share Vanceboro's rich history. Thank you for your donations of time and money, for website reads and Facebook follows, for sharing your photos and memories so generations to come will know Vanceboro's colorful history and outsized contributions to Maine and the country.

From our hearts to yours, the VHS Board wishes you a magical season.

~ Dan Beers, Donna Beach Wright, Lyn Mikel Brown, Enzo Cameli, Dorothy Amero Cummings, Jean Hogan, Faye Luppi, Mary McAleney, Alaine Peaslee-Hinshaw, Cindy Scott, Brenda Smith-Houlberg, and Mark Tappan

Toothing Their Own Horns: Vanceboro's Town Band

The Nov. 4, 1886 issue of *The St. Croix Courier* describes a grand party at the Junction House, a McAdam hotel then operated by Vanceboro resident George W. Ross. The evening's entertainment, the article reports, was provided by the Vanceboro Brass Band.

Some eighty-four years later, when Teresa and Richard Monk moved into their Holbrook Street house, they discovered two brass tubas in the cellar. They'd bought the house from Lloyd Day, a customs inspector, but the instruments, they soon discovered, came from another house Mr. Day owned, once owned by Perley Blanchard. The Monks donated both horns to the Vanceboro Historical Society, where they now bookend a blown-up tintype photograph of the original band.



The photograph is undated, but is clearly taken before 1916, the year Horace Kellogg's store on First Street burned down. This could be the very group that played at the Junction House party that evening. The names on the photograph are illegible now, but to the right a member of the band touches one of the tubas, now a valued artifact in the historical society museum.

The band Perley Blanchard joined was a revitalization of this earlier group, organized and directed in 1922 by Harold Bonneau, a U.S. Customs officer who played and taught violin and clarinet. By 1925, the group was in high demand, offering concerts, marching in the July 4th parade and playing for ball games at home and away.



The second iteration of Vanceboro's marching band, 1923.

Back: J. Meeting, Earle Ketch, Charles Hilchey, Ray Glew, Harry Crocker;

Center: Mr. Urban, Chet O'Brien, Geo Ketch, Nelson Russell, Bill Ward, Carrol Norton, Clair Hanifen, Pat Crandlemire;

Front: McGarrigle, O'Brien, H. Moderios, B. Nason, H. Bonneau, P. Blanchard, P. Russell, Frank Gatcomb, Oscar Glew

Herb Gallison's daughter, Kate, offers a story about her father and his uniform as well as her father's recollection of the band's trip to the 1925 St. Stephen Exhibition.

My dad was always proud of his time with the Vanceboro town band. When he took off the uniform and hung it up at the end of the season, though, he didn't always check the pockets. That was how he failed to put an important family letter in the mail one year, causing a certain amount of ill feeling and kerfuffle. The letter was from one of my great-aunts or second cousins to another one. These ladies took it in six-month shifts to take care of little Bobby, my Aunt Mildred's boy, while Ma was running the store and Mildred was working at her job with the Immigration service. The signal to change shifts was always a letter sent from the lady on duty to the next lady. Because my dad failed to check the pockets of his band uniform that letter was never mailed.

Nobody got mad at him for that. The ladies got mad at each other. My dad as a boy was never brought to book for any of the careless things he did, because he was so sweet and

handsome. I suspect he pretty much got away with murder. In any case, here's the story of the time the band went to parade in the streets of St. Stephen.

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The Town Band

For many years Vanceboro had enough public spirit to boast a winning baseball team, a little theater group, and a better than average brass band.

The town band had been reorganized in 1922 with Harold Bonneau, a new U.S. Customs officer who played and taught violin and clarinet, as the director. When Bonneau was transferred to the Bangor Customs House about 1927 the band tooted its last note.

Some of the more mature members of the group suffered from a common phobia. They had a horror of being bitten by reptiles. Hence, they were constantly on the alert for available sources of an elixir highly recommended, however erroneously, as a cure for snakebite. They had even been seen coming out of the McAdam Pharmacy with little brown bottles of a malt liquor labeled “for invalids and nursing mothers.”

The band was busy in 1925. It played for parades and concerts on Memorial Day and the joint celebration of Canada’s Dominion Day, July 1st, in McAdam and U.S. Independence Day, July 4th, in Vanceboro. It was in McAdam on the 12th day of July to help parade King Billy—white crow bait. It accompanied the team to baseball games at various towns including Princeton. All those performances were but practice sessions for the big event in September.

That year was also the grand finale of two great institutions. The St. Stephen Exhibition was held for the last time. A show was produced that would rival any of those annual events which had delighted young and old for miles around for many, many years. The little Toonerville-type trolley cars, which had picked up and delivered the inhabitants of and visitors to the four border towns, made their last rattling circuit.

The managers of the Exhibition invited brass bands from neighboring towns to play for the event, a different one each day. The arrangement called for a parade of the band, starting at the international boundary halfway across the Ferry Point Bridge. With horns blaring, drums banging, and music books fluttering in the breeze, the band would proceed to St. Stephen, take a ninety-degree right turn down Water to King Street, turn sharp left, and make its musical way out to the exhibition grounds.

On the Vanceboro Band’s day, the members assembled at the Knights of Pythias Hall, mostly bright and generally early. Uniforms pressed, white caps gleaming, duck trousers chalk white, black shoes shined, and instruments mirror-bright, except for the clarinets and drums, which were naturally dull. The members boarded various privately owned automobiles and went bumping down the old Woodstock Road with chins held high by the choker collars. Some noticed that the members with the phobic tendencies all crowded into the same car, complete with instruments. Squeezing the tuba into the trunk didn’t

appear to be easy. Someone was heard to remark, “That car is loaded to the gills.” It was never determined whether the remark was actually directed at the occupants.

Somewhere along the route the five-passenger sedan containing seven uniformed musicians got separated from the caravan. They finally showed up on the bridge just before the band was due to step out. Most of the musicians were not immediately aware that they had detoured through Milltown, where a certain apothecary was reputed to be dispensing the much-sought-after elixir.

The band assumed parade formation in the middle of the bridge. The command was issued and it moved out toward Canada. As it made the right-angle turn down Water Street the band was playing “The Gladiator” by Himself, John Philip Sousa. I two a difficult enough number to play while seated in a concert hall. Near the Canadian Pacific Depot the band made the sharp left turn up King Street.

In front of Burns’ Restaurant, with the thoughts of delicious boiled lobster dripping melted butter causing general salivation, the band struck up “Invercargill,” an old favorite it could play by memory in the dark. Suddenly a trolley car on the rails in the middle of the street came rattling from the direction of the band’s destination.

Something had to give, and that a are coming down grade wasn’t fixing to stop. With the old familiar march tune blaring forth, the band took a starboard tack toward Cliff Hanley’s meat market—all but the tuba player. From the front row on the extreme port quarter he swerved left and marched along the gutter in front of Johnson’s drug store, never missing a note, while the streetcar passed between him and the rest of the band. As the car creaked on by the marchers swung back to the middle of the street and the tuba left the ditch to join formation, still Oompa-oomping those resonant bass notes.

Up the slight grade of King Street the group continued and before the music was finished an even more serious accident occurred. The trombonist in the front row lost control of his music book, which dropped to the pavement. When he stooped to retrieve the book, the slide became detached from the rest of his instrument and the whole works clattered down beneath those shiny black shoes adorning the feet of the man behind him. It was discovered that two size-ten shoes can really raise hell with a slide trombone. The band was minus a trombonist, and the other one, who played a valve trombone, did it by ear.

At last the band was in position to swarm into those creaking chairs in the bandstand. After rendering “America” (which for all intents and purposes was “God Save the King,” and commanded a lot of attention) they played several familiar favorites, familiar to the band, at least. After that, members are allowed a half-hour break to get a hot dog, take a merry-go-round ride, or whatever. The chubby tuba player and the idled trombonist were seen climbing into a ride called the “Caterpillar.” Each time the green canvas cover folded over the occupants of that circling conveyance our two friends took another pull on the snakebite remedy, undoubtedly to ward off the sting of the caterpillar.

Excerpted from Herb Gallison, *The Long Life and Pretty Good Times of Herb Gallison*. Edited by Kate Gallison. Lambertville, N.J. Mystic Dog Press. c1992. [University of Maine, Raymond H. Fogler Library]

VHS NEWS

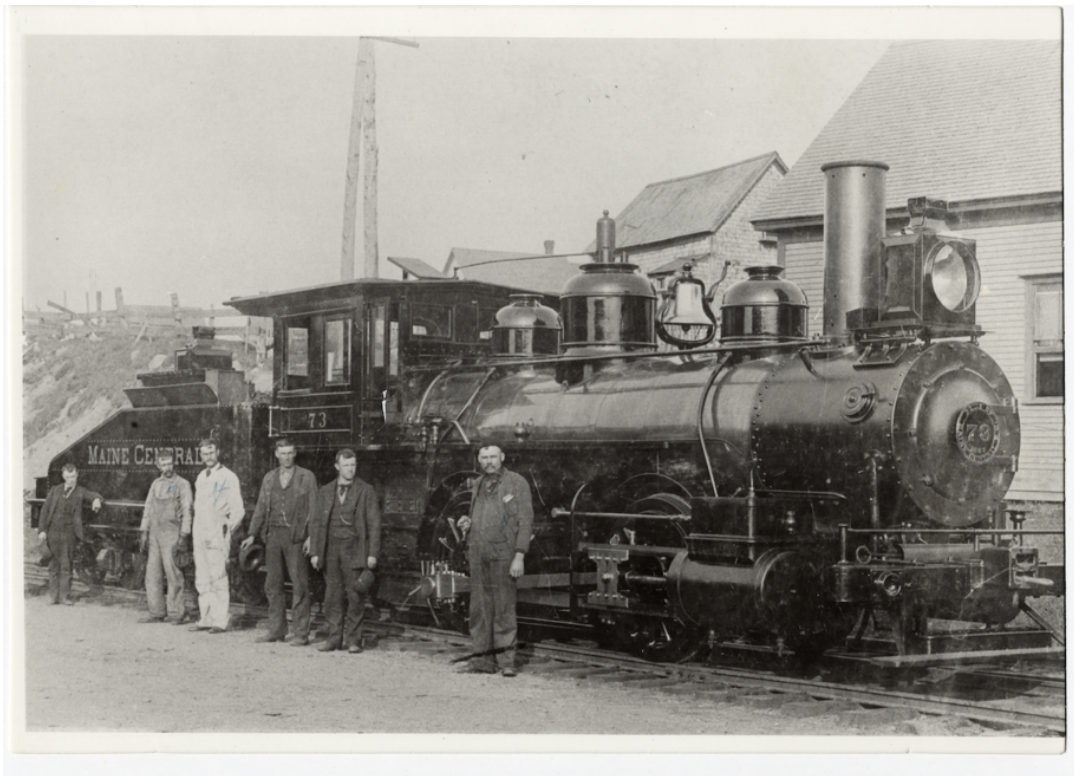
MacDonald Railroad Museum Update

A sunny October day was the perfect backdrop to a second railroad museum workday. Thanks to Mark Hyland for reaching out to Hancock Lumber and to the company for generously contributing pre-finished V Match interior pine siding at 40% off. Mark and Faye Luppi trailered the siding to the museum site where they joined Alaine Peaslee Hinshaw, Christopher Hinshaw, Billy Grass, David Brown and Curty Scott to wire, insulate and begin final finishing work on the building. There is still much to be done this coming spring – the interior to finish, displays to build, research to complete and stories to write. Please let us know if you wish to direct a donation to the MacDonald Railroad Museum.



Preserving Vanceboro's Past on the Maine Memory Network

We're pleased to share efforts to build a growing presence on the **Maine Memory Network**, a statewide digital museum created by the Maine Historical Society. Maine Memory brings together photographs, documents, maps, and stories from historical societies, libraries, and museums across Maine, making local history freely accessible to anyone with an internet connection. By contributing materials to Maine Memory, the Vanceboro Historical Society is preserving and sharing Vanceboro's stories beyond our town borders—ensuring that images, records, and memories of everyday life, work, railroading, and community life in Vanceboro become part of Maine's larger historical record and remain available for future generations. Our first set of photographs will be a collection of railroad images, including this photo of a train crew standing beside Maine Central #73, an American-type 4-4-0 engine built in 1888 by Portland Company. Once everything's in place, we'll post a link on the VHS Facebook page.



Share Your Vanceboro Memories!

Do you have memories of life in Vanceboro, Lambert and surrounding communities? We'd love to hear from you. Whether it's a favorite family tradition, a moment in town history, a tale from school days, the railroad, the river, or simply what everyday life felt like here—your memories help keep our community's history alive. No story is too small; often, the simplest memories paint the richest picture of our town's past.

You can send memories or stories to vanceboro.hs@gmail.com We're also happy to give you a call and record your memories as part of a conversation. We're grateful for every voice that helps

preserve the spirit of Vanceboro for generations to come. As inspiration, we share Margie Hanifen's memories of growing up in Vanceboro. Those with a keen eye will pick out Margie's father, Clair, in the 1923 Vanceboro Band photograph, above.

Vanceboro Daze

By Margie Hanifen Kaine Williams

September 14, 2019

Many things come back to me as I remember my life in Vanceboro. My brother and I were born in a home built by my great grandparents on a street just past the road to Lambert Lake. I could look out of our windows and see miles of trees and Vance Mountain in the distance.

Our neighbors were the Beers family beside us and the Pine family across the street. The Rayes lived behind us. The Tracys lived on the other side of the Beers family. In a house on our property lived Dutchy Ross. He was the town shoemaker. He came into our house at 5 am every day to start the fire for my great aunts whom we lived with. Jim and I spent a lot of time in his house as it smelled like new shoe leather, and he used to tell us great stories. He was always like an uncle to us. We lived with Maggie Hanifen Dooley and Joanie Hanifen, my father's aunts. I was named after both of them. My father was Clair Hanifen and my mother, Lillian Brennan Hanifen. My mother was born in McAdam so Jim and I also spent a lot of time with our grandparents and aunts and uncles in McAdam. Aunt Maggie was one of the town's midwives. She delivered both Jim and me. A few months before I was born she delivered one of our next door neighbors. Because he was born on Christmas Eve she named him Hollis-"Holly"- Beers. In later years Holly used to mention her and that she was the one to blame for his name.

I remember one thing about Vanceboro that I don't think there are many people left that remember this. The spinster Cobb sisters and their brother Alfie lived just up from the railroad station. I think someone mentioned on Facebook that this house was purchased by Beaver Sibley in later years. The Cobb sisters ran a very nice gift shop with beautiful glass objects. I don't think I was ever allowed to go in there without my mother. Their brother Alfie had a deformed back but he used to push a wheelbarrow. He would go down to the train station every day and they would put the mail as it came in on his wheelbarrow and he would deliver it to the post office. Nights the mail would be brought to the train station by the DINKY as the daily train that went back and forth from Bangor used to be called. Around 7 or 8 pm everyone would congregate at the post office to wait for Alfie to bring the mail from the station. This became a meeting place for me and my first love Lindy Kaine. He used to walk me home from the post office every night. I remember him always singing to me on the way home, trying to impress me. I guess. He always used to sing cowboy songs. The one I remember was The Wreck of the old 97 ... isn't that romantic.

In later years on Sundays my girlfriend and I used to walk all over town. My girlfriends were Velma Taylor, Martha Louder, Cissie Crandlemire and Clarice Boone. We would stop at Jane Robinson's house for an ice cream bar or cone. Jane ran a small store down by the railroad tracks where she also had a soda fountain. She had a large freezer on her porch of her home and she



Lindy and Margie, 1944

always kept ice cream in it for all of us. Of course we paid for it. And once in a while a few boys would join us.

I remember the wonderful days at Vanceboro High. Mr. Wescott was the principal and Amie McIver was one of our teachers. And the dance nights at the Hall across from the school and trying to get the boys to dance with us. Then walking home with someone ANYONE, and if it was winter sometimes there would be an ice storm and all the trees would be glistening on the way home. It would be magical. Or a certain time of year we could stop on the hill just past the Cobb house and watch the northern lights giving fantastic shows.

I don't really have any bad memories of Vanceboro except when the little Cropley girl drowned. And when the Crandlemire house burned to the ground and Jerry Crandlemire outside screaming at the firemen to save his house. The fire wagon at that time was drawn by two big horses. I imagine that the driver was Frank Smith Sr. Another memory is that in high school our teacher, Mr. Barrett, from Boston, told us all to look out the window as we would see something that we would never see again. It was a hearse drawn by two horses. He advised that the hearse contained Frank Smith Sr. and that Frank had always driven the hearse and as a courtesy to him it would never be used again.

We did lose two wonderful young men in World War 2. One was a Nason from the other side of town and I don't remember his first name.* I think he was a cousin of Paul and Gary Nason.

The other was Foddy -Forrest- Tracy who lived two doors from us. He was just a year or two older than me so he was a devastating loss to our neighborhood.

I have always said that summer was the Fourth of July in Vanceboro or all of Maine. But our summers were really wonderful. I remember a lot of snow for some winters but we went sliding and skiing and used our taboggans and also ice skates. I used to say that Lindy taught me how to ice skate but his response was, I taught all the girls in Vanceboro how to skate.

All in all, Vanceboro was a wonderful town in which to grow up.

*Paul Nason; Vanceboro lost a third as well -- Frederick (Freddy) S. Mills, for whom the Legion Post was named.

Call for Photos and Artifacts

We love to hear from those who find themselves stewards of old family photographs or artifacts. Thank you to Kim Boehm, grandson of Ella Roix Hodgkins Johnson. Before marrying Allan Johnson, Ella was the widow of Edward Hodgkins, a well know guide whose brother Billy ran a hotel and guide service in Lambert Lake. Kim sent along this photo. His Aunt Reitha Hodgkins Scribner wrote on the back in faded pencil: "Sporting camp Lambert Lake, Bill and Belle Hodgkins – 1891.



If you have historical photographs, books, artifacts, papers or records to donate or share, please go to our homepage (<https://vanceborohistorical.org/>) and download a donation form or simply email our museum curator, Alaine Peaslee-Hinshaw at alainepeasleehinshaw@gmail.com

Join Vanceboro Historical Society's Mailing List

We are gathering contact information from VHS members and friends so we can keep you in the loop about events, museum openings/updates, newsletters, and everything Vanceboro! If you are willing, please provide your information using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/2ra2hvtx>

Support VHS

'Tis the season to give the gift of hometown history! VHS is supported through membership donations. To make a tax-deductible gift, please use our secure online system (<https://tinyurl.com/yn3s78r4>) 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 for the entire family