



SPRING 2014

RYE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

www.ryenhistoricalsociety.org

Dudley Dudley to Speak on 40th Anniversary of Oil Refinery Defeat

On Thursday April 24 at 7:30 PM in the Rye Public Library, Dudley Dudley of Durham will speak about her experience in defeating an oil refinery on the shores of Great Bay. This illustrated talk will demonstrate the importance of grassroots efforts to preserve our environment and way of life. Q and A will follow the talk and refreshments will be served. The event is free and open to the public.

It was in the fall of 1973 that Publick Occurrences, a small weekly Newmarket newspaper published by Phyllis Bennett, revealed that the options on land around Durham and the Seacoast were part of a plan by Aristotle Onassis to build the world's largest oil refinery. A terminal on Lunging Island (part of the town of Rye) would pipe 400,000 gallons of crude a day from the Isles of Shoals under the Atlantic to Concord Point in Rye, then across land to the shores of Great Bay in Durham, where the oil would be refined and piped out. Once this was made public it didn't take long for residents to activate. The grass roots organization, Save Our Shores (SOS), was founded and chaired

by Nancy Sandberg and new representative Dudley Dudley of Durham, introduced House Bill 18 (Home Rule) in the New Hampshire Legislature requiring approval from the towns before a refinery could be built. Onassis had the full support of New Hampshire Governor Meldrim Thompson and the Manchester Union Leader, but the bill passed by a large margin in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Exercising the new home rule law, Durham voted overwhelmingly (13-1) against the refinery in March 1974 and made the front page of the New York Times. We had beaten Big Oil!



New Rye History Exhibit at Town Museum – Opens May Day

Board Members Alex Herlihy and Robina Mitchell, along with volunteer staff member Andrew Hickey, have been hard at work redesigning the museum and its exhibits. This redesign mission is the first time the museum has been majorly changed in over four years. One of the main goals is to make the museum exhibit on Rye history clearer, more organized and in more depth.

Upon walking into the museum, visitors will experience a redesigned welcome area where they can sign the guest book and find membership information. The right side of

the museum will be an illustrated Rye history, divided by centuries. This exhibit will give visitors a condensed, lineal version of Rye's history.

The left side of the museum will consist of more in depth themes to complement the linear history. These themes are tourism, maritime, military, agriculture and Rye churches. The exhibits will focus on their historical importance to Rye and place them in a wider historical context. Later this year we will be installing additional theme exhibits upstairs.

Soon we will add a third layer of history for those who want to go in deep. Visitors will be able to look through further photos related to the theme and extensive written material and we will be asking for your contributions of Rye information, stories, anecdotes, photos and suggestions you may have about the exhibit

The downstairs exhibits will be ready for the grand opening with refreshments Please join us for this event on Thursday May 1st. 4-7 PM

Robina Mitchell



Museum Open for Season on Saturday May 3rd

Regular hours will resume at the town museum on Saturday May 3rd from 10 – 1 and every Saturday thereafter until the end of October. Additional hours will occur on most Wednesdays from 2 -4 and the museum is open at most times on request by calling 997 6742. After May 2nd museum volunteers will continue to work on the new exhibit by

adding additional thematic sections on the 2nd floor. Visit our newly organized library where there is a Rye tavern exhibit, many books on Rye, the seacoast and beyond, an extensive textile collection, 170 years of town reports and a variety of other printed material and artifacts.

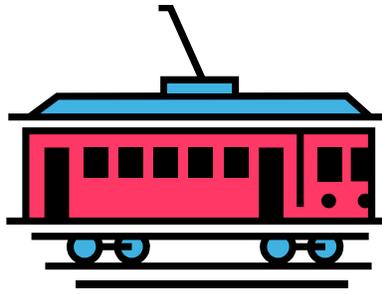


New Donations to the Museum

In recent years the museum has been fortunate to receive many interesting and valuable items from generous donors, including a Locke family Bible, an 1890 diary found in a house on Cable Rd., an historic table and chairs from an old Rye house and many other items. Also donated has been an abundance of printed material ranging from letters to monographs on Rye topics and many other items which all add to the richness of our collection.

The museum staff is working to publicize all of our collection on the RHS web site: www.ryenhyhistoricalsociety.org. Last year we began this project by listing many of the items in the collection on the web site under the category “index of resources.”

The main purpose of housing all this material is to both display some of it for the public and have all of it available for those who want to research some aspect of Rye history.



Three New Trolley Tours

This year we are revising the routes of the Trolley Tours to take in other historic places and stops that our earlier tours didn't have time to visit. If you have taken tours before, you may find this year's tours revealing exciting sites, not seen before.

Whether you never have seen historic Rye from the trolley or travel through our town with a Historical Society guide the first time, you will learn more about our town.

Our planned tours for 2014 will be on Saturdays, May 24th, July 5th, and October 11th.

The times of the Tours will be from 10 A M to 11:30a.m., leaving from the Museum and returning to the Museum.

Call (603) 997-6742 to reserve a seat on the trolley and see Rye in a way you haven't before.

Fares: Adults – \$20.00 ♣ Members and Children – \$18

North Hampton to Present Historic Stonewall Program

Kevin Gardner, builder and restorer of stonewalls and author of "The Granite Kiss: Traditions and Techniques of Building New England Stonewalls" will present a program at the North Hampton Town Hall on Atlantic Avenue beside Joe's Meat Market on Monday April 21st at 7 PM

Hampton Newspaper Archivist Guru Helps Rye History

Tom Clarie is well known in Rye for his “Just Rye Harbor” which he wrote with his wife Rosemary and his new book published last year “Oceanside History of Rye Beach and the Farragut.” I first got to know him at the museum when he offered to create a computer scanned index for Bill Varrell’s long out of print “Rye on the Rocks” (1962). Tom’s Oceanside is a unique view of coastal Rye and Little Boars Head through the eyes of local reporters covering the 1860’s to the 1950’s. Making use of extensive on line access to historic newspapers Tom gave us a view of our history that is often only covered by the local press and often overlooked by other students of history. It is social history served up in a very immediate and daily form, the way all of us who love to read the papers are used to.

In writing Oceanside, Tom agonized over the endless mine of articles spanning this amazing century of change. He may have thought he would get a rest after publishing the book but my intense interest in mining newspapers got him back on line and he has been a tremendous resource for me in writing the new history of Rye. In fact I told him that he is in charge of the dozens of news article references he has sent to the museum computer. It will be a tall order for us to integrate this wealth of local lore, but I know Tom, a true friend of Rye history, will be up to the task. The new history will be all the richer for it.

New John Smith Monument for Ragged Neck

A committee, including state officials, is planning to erect a substantial monument at Ragged Neck state park to commemorate the 400th anniversary of his Map of New England and his publicity about the Isles of Shoals and the rest of New England. RHS emphasized to the chair of the committee that Smith did not discover the Shoals nor

were they his Isles, much as he would have us believe to the contrary, because the islands had been inhabited and worked all through the 1500's by European fishermen.



For the New History of Rye

Seeking -Stories, information, anecdotes, memories of people, places and events. Suggested length – 5 pages or less, but more is acceptable.

Choose a person, place event that you know well and write about it or get it on tape. With your prior approval, this contribution will be included, all or in part, in the new history of Rye that Alex Herlihy is writing and you will receive a byline with your story. More than one topic is welcome. Please check with me to avoid duplication of topics, although multiple views on the same topic are also important.

A significant part of the 20th century will be written by those who know the history. The parts of what you write that do not appear in the book will be maintained in the town museum as a historical record of that time. Photos are needed. They will be copied in the library & returned. You will receive working document that shows who is working on what topic. Long hand is acceptable, but Word document preferred.

This project emerged from a 100 page timeline of Rye events, etc. which I created last year, taken from sources such as Parsons' History of Rye, Bill Varrell histories, Rye Town Reports, etc. Regional and New England histories will help to give context to Rye's place in the larger scheme of things. Much primary research remains to be done. Some imagined history will be included to fill in the gaps. Thank You for helping to preserve Rye's history and bring it to life.

See other document: initial list, authors/topics; send more suggestions

Contact: alexherlihy@comcast.net; tel. 997 6742, 55 Lang Rd, Rye

Many thanks to Harry Lowell for making the first contribution - his childhood memories of Rye Harbor in the 1920's

An Excerpt from the new History of Rye

In 1753 the first agricultural and commercial fair was sponsored by the town taverns. There were many contests and much buying and selling. Rye's 19th century resort era changed the nature of the town, but there were still dozens of farms in town at the end of World War II. Perhaps Goss Farm will revive this annual celebration of our agricultural heritage. At least four ordinaries (taverns) have been documented in Rye. Benjamin Scadgel kept one on Wallis Road until it burned in 1798; the 1799 house on the site today (#321) was built on the original foundation of the tavern. In 1747 William Trefethen built a tavern in Rye Center (#545 Washington Road), sold it to three Garland brothers in 1756 and they carried it on until around 1800. This watering hole and inn became the center of social and political life during the Revolution and the early years of the new nation. It was quick to fill after the long church services and many unhappy women were seen returning in the evening to drag their husbands home. At Chesleys four corners (last house on the right on West Road before South), William Sleeper also ran a tavern in the 1800's. Paul Randall and later Joe Libbee and his brother were innkeepers on Washington road between Grove and West Roads until it burned in 1787. Taverns were venerable and needed institutions which nourished their patrons in a variety of ways, but the tension caused by the minority who abused alcohol would soon boil over in Rye and across the new nation in the 1800's. (The ledger of the Garland tavern is a prized possession of the Rye Town museum and is a gold mine for those wanting to research the rich variety of ardent spirits our predecessors enjoyed).

Museum Needs Desktop Computer

The town museum is in need of a relatively new and gently used desk top computer. Our current one is over eight years old and is failing. If anyone has one available and is willing to donate it, please contact the museum at info@ryenhhistoricalsociety.org
Thank You.



Time to Renew Membership Dues

RHS is organizing its membership to that renewal of dues coordinates with the annual meeting in April. If you have made a membership contribution in the last six months it is good until April 2015. Otherwise we ask that you renew this April. You may do so at the individual (\$10) or family (\$15) levels and any additional contribution is greatly appreciated. Payment is via Pay Pal on RHS website – www.ryenhhistoricalsociety.org or by check made out to RHS and sent to PO 583, Rye. Thank you for your continued support.

For those who are not members but are considering it, please review the benefits below. We look forward to having you join us. There are many different opportunities to participate in the life of the society and the museum and it is a very inviting way to connect to the life of the town.

- ✚ Quarterly E-newsletter (sent bcc) to keep you in the Rye history loop
- ✚ Invitation to special events and alerts on issues relating to Rye history
- ✚ Participation and voting on important decisions at April annual meeting
- ✚ 10% discount on items from the museum's gift shop (listed on website)
- ✚ Invitation to RHS Board meetings: quarterly
- ✚ Discovery that one of your interests or talents matches one of RHS needs (listed on website)
- ✚ All members of RHS have a standing invitation to a specialized tour of the museum's collection in whole or in part.
- ✚ Knowledge that you are helping to keep the town museum open and vital

The Rye Historical Society is active in co-sponsoring programs with the Rye Public Library and Friends of the Library. We work with the Rye Heritage Commission, the Historic District Commission and Rye Schools. Current projects: writing a new town history, supporting student research, preserving old graveyards, documenting older houses, archiving church records and textile collection, making the museum's collections more accessible to the public, etc.