

Rye Historical Society/Town Museum

End of 2014 News

Web site: www.ryenhistoricalociety.org
inquiries: info@ryenhistoricalociety.org or call: 603 997 6742

Listing of Articles

Museum Holiday Open House Dec 18
Remembering Mike Mittelman
New Rye Town Flag – Purchase Information
Fate of South School and Preservation of Rye's Heritage
RHS Now Digitizing Slides
New RHS Web site Feature
Thanking Local Businesses
Recent Donations to the Museum
Memoir of a Farragut Hotel Waiter in the Summer of 1966
Volunteer Opportunities at the Museum
Reconnecting with Rye Sussex England
Excerpt from the New Rye History
Town Museum Year Round Hours
Membership Information

Museum Holiday Open House Thursday Dec. 18, 2-6

Do some last minute shopping at our gift shop (see website tab for items), enjoy refreshments and our new Rye history exhibit and experience the thrill of a working H and O train in action which replicates the early trains that began bringing visitors to Rye in the 1840's.

Remembering Mike Mittelman

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Mike Mittelman who was a long time RHS Board member. We first met Mike ten years ago when he tried, unsuccessfully, to get the town to spend a small amount to place the Town Hall on the National Registry of Historic Places. This status would have given public recognition to this historic public

space and opened up grant possibilities, but not restricted the town in any way as to what it did with the building.

Through photography, Mike documented all the old burying grounds in town (60+), spearheaded museum signage, was active in setting up RHS programs at the library, and created the Rye Town Flag project which will soon be a reality. Mike was full of life and very active with questions for program presenters. He will be greatly missed.

New Rye Town Flag – Purchase Information

RHS will be taking orders for the new Rye Town Flag and soon information about price and size will be posted on its web site under the tab “Gift Shop.” To order a flag write to: info@ryenhistoricalociety.org. The creation of this flag was one of the last projects of former RHS board member Mike Mittelman and it will be a lasting legacy of all his volunteer work for the town.

Fate of South School House Renews Effort to Save Old Rye

The fate of the historic 1881 South School House on Central Road has renewed efforts of the Rye Historical Society to document our historic built environment. RHS has compiled the beginning of an old building documentation project with photos of most of the structures and some information, but much more building research needs to be done, including digitizing the completed project for public access. (If you are interested in assisting with this needed project, please write:

info@ryenhistoricalociety.org)

Once completed, this information will go a long way to educating current and prospective property owners in Rye of the historic value of Rye buildings. Realtors doing business in Rye can help to educate prospective buyers. The Rye Heritage Commission will also be assisting with this project.

It has been well documented by Portsmouth historian Dennis Robinson, among others, that the preservation of such historic buildings adds value on many levels to a community.

Some people take for granted the beauty of the town and don't realize that with every demo of a significant building we lose part of that beauty and part of our heritage and, in purely economic terms, we experience a loss of property values.

Unless communities protect their old structures through zoning, etc., the only recourse they have is through public education by placing buildings on the state and national registries, creating historic districts, the bully pulpit, public hearings, and the RHS old building project.

Now is the time to act. If you are interested in helping, please contact us at the e-mail above.

The South School house is available to anyone who wants to move it to a lot and renovate it into a home again. If no one claims the building it will be demolished in April. If interested, call owner Joy Roy at 964 2032.

RHS Now Digitizing Slides for Power Point Presentations

Over the years RHS has accumulated quite a large collection of slides and it is still possible to put on shows with that venerable old technology. However, the clarity and ease of presenting digitized versions of these images has prompted the society to purchase a digital slide converter which we are now using to convert hundreds of slides to store on our computer and create new programs for the public. The first one you will see next year is the "Moving of the Marston House" in which a house originally built in the 17th century and then added on to twice was dismantled in 1975, moved to Rye and reassembled, thus making it the oldest house in town.

New Feature on RHS Web Site

When you go to our website (www.ryenhistoricalociety.org) you will see a new tab entitled: "Rye History: 400 Years."

Here you will find several primary and secondary documents which will give you a substantial feel for the town's past. Included are the Founding Families, letters, diary entries, graveyards and much more.

Further documents will be added soon and suggestions are welcome. This addition was prompted by an RHS effort to give Rye students an on line connection to their history, but the material will be of interest to all. The challenge now is to get students and others to open this tab and discover a whole new world of Rye history.

RHS Thanks Local Businesses

Each Year Green Penguin Landscaping mows the museum lawn and Rye Ridge Greenery maintains the lovely planting in front of the museum. These services are done as a contribution. We are grateful to both of these Rye businesses for their generous support!

Recent Donations to the Museum

Bev Armstrong donated her extensive post card collection of almost 1000 Rye images taken in the early and mid-20th century.

Ed Paradisio returned four Farragut Hotel cocktail glasses he had appropriated as a waiter in 1966 (see his memoir of that summer below).

Brown donated a farm ledger

Jenny Ritter donated a model of the historic stone East School house she had made while a student at Rye Jr high

Dan Philbrick donated a diary from 1891 which he found in his Philbrick's By the Sea house on Cable Rd.

Dorothy Bloom donated a color photo of the Jenness Boarding House on Central Rd before it was torn down in the late 30's; she also donated 11 sepia photographs taken a Wallis Sands before the war.

Ralph Morang donated items relating to the Bicentennial celebration and the Rye Light Infantry Militia

Alma Locke, through her daughter Elizabeth, donated an 1844 Locke Family Bible

Michael Dow donated a sampling of woodwork from the Farragut Hotel

Jacki Gacek donated a 19th cent. "one horse open sleigh" (aka a pung or democrat)

Rye Congregational Church gave a long term loan of all the church records from 1726

Virginia Crandall donated a brochure of the 2nd Ocean House (1963-1872) which was located where the intersection of Cable and Ocean Boulevard is today.

William Steven Brown donated a farm ledger from William Goss dated 1828

A Farragut Hotel Waiter Remembers His Summer of 1966

It was the summer of 1966 and I was to turn 17 at the end of July and in September I would enter my senior year in high school in Massachusetts. I begged my parents to allow me to spend the summer with a friend in Hampton Beach. To my amazement they consented.

When I arrived I rented a room in a guest house named The Beverly (\$10 a week) and gained employment as a dishwasher at Hudson's Restaurant. I would surf in the morning before my shift and work from 2-10 for \$48 a week plus two meals a day. This was my first taste of freedom and I felt like I was on top of the world. About four weeks after I arrived, my parents came up to check on me. They stayed at the Farragut Hotel in Rye Beach and my Dad, being the classy business person that he was, managed to talk the Maitre d into hiring me as a waiter. He told him my quarters would be in a nice building next to the hotel. (*this building was the original hotel in Rye, the "Atlantic House" built in 1846.*)

It turned out the girls got the nice rooms and the waiters stayed upstairs in this building we called "The Ritz" which was anything but. Downstairs was a room where the dishwashers and cooks played cards and drank. The building was greatly in need of paint inside and out and would probably be condemned by today's standards. It was perfect. Nobody gave a damn what we did or what we destroyed as long as we did our jobs. I recall frequent squirt gun fights, one that escalated into garden hoses inside and pillow fights that followed. There were wet feathers stuck to the walls and floor. Here is the best part: we had maid service and they cleaned up after us and did our laundry. I served three meals per day to guests. I would set the table with Wedgwood plates and real silver ware; it was very elegant. The guests would write their orders on a hotel order slip and I would remove the Wedgwood plates and replace them with their meals. We were told that if we broke a Farragut plate (*with image of the hotel on it and on display in the museum*) we would be charged \$100. My uniform consisted of tuxedo pants, white shirt, bow tie and a Farragut tuxedo jacket. I played the part perfectly. In a meeting the Maitre d said: "Ed, who has no prior waiting experience, is doing a bang up job." I was floored by the compliment.

The pay was insane. I had five tables and guests would generally stay a week and they tipped an average of \$50. The hotel fed me great meals and paid \$14 a week. I was making over \$250 a week with room and board in 1966 and I was only 17 years old, while the average American was making \$100 a week at that time. One waitress had a table with the owner of Macys who stayed for the summer and on the last day I heard her scream. They gave her a Macy's credit card to purchase a wardrobe for her first year of college. The same waitress one day bumped into something in the kitchen and dropped her tray full of Farragut plates. Fortunately they never charged her.

I would grab my surfboard and walk to the beach everyday between shifts. All I talked about was Hobie surfboards and how much I wanted one. My stick was an 8' 6" pop out.

I was so obsessed my girlfriend at the time nicknamed me Hobie and it stuck for the summer. I did not buy the Hobie board but instead bought a 1958 Ford Fairlane from Artie, a fellow waiter, on the last day. It wasn't until 47 years later that I bought the Hobie. I have owned several boards, but the price of the Hobie was more than twice what I am used to paying.

On nights when my shift ended early I would catch a ride with Artie or hitchhike to the strip in Hampton Beach. One night I hitched back and was picked up by a right hand drive sports car and the driver was reckless and loud. I asked him to let me out on the boulevard but he drove right up to the hotel. He made a lot of noise and was rattling on incoherently. When I exited the car the hotel owner came out. I remember him as a dark haired, tall, handsome middle aged man, maybe 180 pounds. He said to me: "Who the hell are you and why are you here?" I responded: "Eddie Paradisio, sir, I work here and I'm sorry about the noise. I told him to let me off on the boulevard." At that point the sports car burned rubber as it left the hotel. He responded: "You're fired." And walked back inside. I was devastated. The night desk clerk was a friend of mine and witnessed the event; he took me inside and said: "Don't worry, he won't remember in the morning. He has fired me three times but never remembers." I very quietly snuck back to the Ritz and went to bed. The next morning I went to work and everything was fine.

One guest who sticks in my mind was Mr. Swane. He was president of the NH Poetic Society and was at the hotel with other members. Somehow eh took an interest in me and would engage in conversation and was very analytical. I remember him saying: "I took a walk behind the hotel last night and heard someone who sounded a lot like you say 1-2-3; then I heard a group of young men shout "The Farragut sucks." Of course I denied it. He just smiled. It was like I had a double life – a high class waiter at work and a topical, hell raising, teenage, surf bum in my time off.

Mr.Swane left me a poem for a tip. He said he was going to dedicate it to me in his book. Somehow it stuck in my head for all these years. At the time of course I felt cash would have been more appropriate.

Yearningly youth sits on the edge of time
He sees the great mushroom cloud
He searches and searches for its rhyme
New oceans to cross new mountains to climb
The questions is – is there still time?

He had my number and I was one of those kids who could not wait to grow up and make my mark on the world.

It was as if all of us waiters were in competition to see who could appropriate the most bar glasses and other items. We even engraved on the ashtrays: "Lifted from the Farragut Hotel" I am glad to return the glasses to the Rye Town Museum after 48 years. In 1966 I would not have dreamed that my actions then would contribute to the preservation of an historic event (*and such an historic hotel*).

RHS Seeking Volunteers

It has been a good year at the museum, but we know there are many residents who have not seen it. Once you do you may be interested in supporting it through a wide variety of volunteer opportunities that may match your interests and skills. Many of these tasks can be done from home. See our volunteer list on web site tab "Contact Us" for details.

Reconnecting with Rye, Sussex, England

In 1980 Mayor Jo Kirkham of Rye Sussex England paid an official visit to Rye NH and a delegation of three members of the Rye Historical Society reciprocated that visit and stayed with the mayor in the ancient village in 1981. Recently we re-connected with Jo and she is now head of the Rye Museum Association (see web site below) and very active in many aspects of the life of our namesake town. In a future issue of the newsletter Jo will write an article about their museum, society and the history of Rye, Sussex.

Below is a short excerpt from a recent letter she sent about the Rye Museum Association:

"We are really Rye Museum Association - but we own Rye Castle - built 1249 - and use that for the web site. We also amalgamated with the Rye Local History Group, of which I was President, about 10 years ago and our Journal still bears their title.

Today we opened a temporary Exhibition for the Rye Festival called 'the French Connection' - we've got documents from the archives - the earliest is I think 1182 - about our connections across the Channel. Things have been manic getting ready for it. I have been writing text for the catalogue until midnight every night this week."

Our site is <http://www.ryemuseum.co.uk/>

Rye NH was named after Rye Sussex England when the village was granted parish status in 1726. Rye was chosen to honor the Jenness family from Rye, England who helped to found Sandy Beach in 1623.

Excerpt from the New Rye History

The late Ray Brighton was an editor of the Portsmouth Herald and author of local history topics. He wrote a column for the Herald and in the one below he found a gem about Rye which brings our town to light in a very detailed manner.

In 1879 a correspondent for the Exeter Newsletter and Rye resident, had the presence of mind to take an inventory of Rye. Here is the story:

“Rye is not a very large town containing about 1000 inhabitants, but we can muster nine blacksmiths, three butchers, 37 carpenters, one cooper, one carriage trimmer, one clergyman, three dressmakers, one doctor, sixteen fishermen and one harness maker. (In addition we have) one lawyer, six masons, four music teachers, four painters, two amateur printers, six shoemakers, two surveyors, seven school teachers, seventeen international telegraph operators, five teamsters and about 200 farmers. There are three churches, four school houses, a good town hall, four hotels, 22 private boarding houses, five grocery stores, two saw mills, two grist mills, a lifesaving station, a submarine telegraph office, two post offices, a temperance club and a brass band.”

The three churches included the two in Rye Center and St Andrews by the sea which was summer only and had visiting clergy to preach. Apparently one of the center churches was without a pastor at this time. We know that one of those seven teachers was a saint (for teaching at decrepit East School), the complexity of running the new telegraph office is evident in this large number of operators and the number of farmers was probably higher given that most were still engaged in some form of agriculture. We know there was a wooden East school, a South school must have existed prior to building the brick one in 1881, the wooden West school (which still stands on Washington three buildings beyond Grove road) must have been there and the wooden center school was located where the bank now sits. There were certainly more than four hotels including two or three smaller ones on Cable Rd. Regarding the mills, we know there was an early one on Seavey Creek in the north end of town as well as one on Lovers Lane and two more nearby on Central Rd and Red Mill lane, all powered by Baileys Brook that flowed into the Eel pond. As far as clubs go, the temperance was but one of many that used town hall and met in private homes, but the tea totaling movement was on the rise and got the most publicity.

Town Museum Year Round Hours

Please think of the town museum as being open all year at most any time. Just call the museum at: 997 7642 and we will find a mutually convenient time. Often, if you are standing at the museum and see this invitation, it can be open for you in a matter of five minutes. Or you can e-mail to set up an appointment: info@ryenhhistoricalsociety.org

The regular hours at the museum are most Wednesdays 2-4 year round and when the flag is out. From May through October, the museum has regular hours on Saturdays 10-1. With more volunteers we could increase our regular hours during the warm months. Contact the museum if you are interested. Once people visit the museum they are amazed at what a rich repository of culture, history and heritage of our town lies within.

Join RHS – Membership Only \$10

The Rye Historical Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and all contributions, membership and otherwise, are tax deductible. Dues are payable in April when the annual meeting is held. This year, as we formalize the April to March membership year, a membership contribution in the six months prior to April 2014 will have your membership paid to April 2015. If you made a membership contribution in 2013 it is time to renew. You may do so at the individual (\$10) or family (\$15) level and any additional contribution is greatly appreciated. Payment is via Pay Pal on our website or by check made out to Rye Historical Society and sent to PO Box 583, Rye, NH 03870. Thank you for your support.

End – Happy Holidays!