

# RYE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND TOWN MUSEUM



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## 2017 RHS President's Report for Annual Meeting

This is a very special day - Welcome to the largest annual meeting, the largest membership in our history and the first such meeting in the summer. We would like to thank our hosts, Debbi and Garritt Toohey, for generously opening their lovely home to us today, the former Rye Beach Inn built around 1913. First I will give my five minute president's report, followed by a less than one minute board nomination process and then we will hear your ideas and suggestions for RHS .

As many of you know, one of our board members, Chris Remick, died earlier this month. Chris served our board quietly but in so many valuable ways. As a deacon of the Congregational church Chris enabled the church to provide a long term loan of all their records to the museum. She organized our extensive textile collection which is now waiting for another volunteer to archive. Her wry sense of humor was on full display in the column she wrote for Fosters and our one on one talks. Her love of Ireland sent her to the eastern terminus of the first successful trans-Atlantic cable which came to Rye in 1874 and her album of that site is on display in the museum. She also kept our membership organized when it was at the lowest point and laid the foundation for its great revival this year. Where would the board members have been without Chris to fill in for them on Saturdays at the museum? And in 2015 she appeared in a non-speaking role in a film made by my daughter and her husband in her beloved church. Chris, we will miss you greatly.

We are also remembering today some of those stalwart members from the past who built the society in the first 30 years. My mother Jessie who founded the society in 1976, Louise Tallman, who did extraordinary research and left that legacy with us and Bonnie Goodwin, my co-chair for 15 years and the overseer of the renovation of the museum which opened in 2002 and so many other people who have served before us.

I would like to introduce our other board members, Becky Marden, our secretary who along with me is a

charter member, Rich Davis, Anne Arnold and Debbie Toohey. Treasurer Steve Cash and VP James Tegeeder could not be with us today. We have a core of a half dozen volunteers who have been instrumental in our success, one of whom is my wife Nina who has been a great support to me over the years is always finding and suggesting items for display in the museum, who does great refreshments for museum events and who sometimes refers to herself as the Rye history widow. Another volunteer is Frank Drake who provided space for us to park today, opens the Drake House lobby for Rye history tours and donated all the hotel registers to the museum and much hotel history. Former board member Robina Mitchell is largely responsible for the current museum exhibit and Andy Richmond and Mary Coombs, public and Jr high librarians, got us our grant last year. We need more such volunteers to work on the following and other identified projects: old house documentation digitizing the old graveyard documents learning to give Rye history trolley tours developing a program to take the museum into Rye classrooms archiving parts of the museum collection archiving textile collection developing new museum exhibits planning special programs at the museum taking care of the museum gardens digitizing Congregational church records organizing a yard sale of items in our basement staffing the museum on Saturdays researching genealogy helping with museum custodial duties including exterior painting researching Rye history for a new book on this topic promoting RHS film collection if these or other topics interest you please contact us at 997 6742 or [info@ryenhistoricalociety.org](mailto:info@ryenhistoricalociety.org)

Since 2015 we have experienced a renaissance that is still flowering. It started when Lisa Moll of Rye began researching the Oil refinery crisis of 1974 and later showed me her finished grad paper and I said – RHS could publish this. In June, RHS published "Rye's Battle of the Century: Saving the Seacoast from Olympic Oil" by Lisa Moll, after 42 years, the first book on this momentous seacoast history topic. We held two book presentations and discussions by the author in June and November at the library and Lisa generously donated the profits from sales of the book to RHS. We collaborated with the Rye General Store to create a large photographic exhibit on the history of Coastal Rye for permanent display at the store.

Along with the Library we hosted a special program by Portsmouth's Black History Trail on the History of Slavery in New Hampshire including Rye. In collaboration with the Rye Public Library and the Rye Junior High School, RHS received a \$5,000 grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation to digitize primary sources (1850-1920) from the museum's collection, to be placed on our web site for on line research. Robin Silva of the Portsmouth Athenaeum was engaged to do the job.

New Board member Anne Arnold spearheaded the effort to create a monthly on line newsletter via Constant Contact and this was instrumental in stimulating interest in the society, improving publicity and increasing membership. Anne also got us to set up a table at the 2017 town elections where we increased our membership even further. Thank You Anne.

Rye resident and computer professional Laurie Holbrook donated her time to upgrade the RHS web site and assist with other technical issues. A full capacity (32) Rye History Trolley Tour on Labor Day 2016 was followed by two more sellouts on Memorial Day and the 4th of July in 2017. The next one is Labor day Sept 4th

Virginia Garland donated a large and wide ranging collection from the historic Garland house on Garland Road, some of which is on display in the museum and Richard Locke donated a Revolutionary war sword and Civil War rifle and Irene Rand donated a Revolutionary rifle, all three of which came down from their Rye ancestors. Don Stevens donated more class photos from the 1950's and they and other albums of Rye history are on display for you today. In the past year RHS has established a more formal relationship with both schools which will lead to curriculum integration of museum resources, field trips and RHS visits to the classroom. This summer we have two 8th grade graduates who are helping me at the museum – our first Rye school interns.

Garritt and Debbi Toohey of Sea Road, donated \$5,000 to RHS for the purpose of highlighting the history of Rye Beach hotels and Boarding Houses as well as other features of this part of town during the heyday of Rye as a Victorian summer resort. Jen King, a recent UNH museum studies graduate, was engaged to do research on this project. Jen will be presenting an illustrated talk on her research on Thursday August 10th at the library. Watch for publicity in the August newsletter. We have a full slate of public programs at the library this year which you are well aware of from the newsletter. New board member Debbi Toohey initiated an every household RHS mailing paid for by Carey and Giampa and the Tooheys and that effort put us over the top of our goal of 100 memberships (we now have 108 regular and 35 lifetime memberships – almost 200 people.) Thank You Debbi and Garritt!

Members, we are grateful for your financial support, but are also in need of your new ideas and volunteer time because our small board and limited number of volunteers cannot possibly handle all of the new activity which this renaissance has generated. Just one example of our many projects is old house documentation which is on hold, waiting for one or two people to finish it. In order to attract people to the museum we know that we need to have special events there using our collection, but we need help to organize these events. Please remember that each of you has an open invitation to visit the museum at any time it is mutually convenient for both of us. Soon we will hear your ideas, questions and comments about the society and the museum and you can also talk to us after this business meeting, leave suggestions on the RHS table and e-mail or call us. Often just a good conversation can open doors and get things done and much of the work can be done from home.

I would like to conclude with a quote which our host Debbi Toohey gave me: "History can often be lost through

the years, but here at RHS, over the decades, we are chronicling the past in order to share it with future generations.”

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**Museum Summer Hours**  
**Most Wednesdays 3pm to 5pm**  
**Saturday 10am - 12pm**  
**The Museum is open by request at (almost)**  
**ANY TIME!**  
**We're here for you - please email us at**  
**[info@ryenhhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@ryenhhistoricalsociety.org)**



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