

GREETINGS FROM THE SEBAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*By Ann Burns,
Sebago Historical Society President*

A SMALL WHITE CHURCH IN THE CONVENE SECTION OF SEBAGO WELCOMES VISITORS WHO'D LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THEIR LITTLE TOWN. THE CHURCH IS THE HOME OF THE SEBAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY WITH MEMBERS EAGER TO SHARE HOW THE TOWN HAS GROWN FROM WOODED FORESTS TO A BUSTLING TOURIST RETREAT.

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Sign in front of the society building

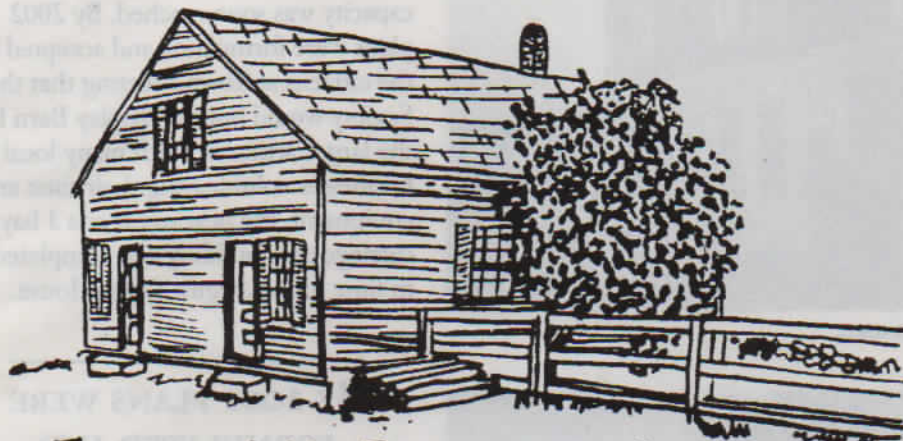


Lillian Amrhein and George Tinkham as the latter explains the History of the Boston Post Cane at the Open House during which she was the latest recipient as the oldest citizen of Sebago.

The Historical Society was formed in the midst of the anticipated celebrations for America's Bicentennial in 1976. As it would also be the Sesquicentennial for the Town of Sebago, renewed interest in the early years of Sebago was foremost in the minds of many citizens. While the original committee was formed in 1974 for those celebrations, discussions followed and the members of the local Grange arranged for interested persons to gather at their hall in anticipation of forming a Sebago Historical Society.

The purpose of the formation of the society was to encourage and promote an interest and appreciation of the history of the Town of Sebago through the collection, research and preservation of information, materials or artifacts. The earliest programs were held at the Town Hall Dining room, with speakers, discussions, films, planning and proposals for future growth, and the gathering of materials to preserve and protect for the future. As the years passed, it appeared a futile venture with no place for growth or

Sebago Historical Society



Free Will Baptist Church

Sebago Historical Society, Convene, Sebago, Maine

This building was built as the Freewill Baptist Church in 1844. One hundred years later it became the Convene Church of the Nazarene. In 1996 the Town of Sebago purchased it for the use of the Sebago Historical Society for meetings and display space.

even a place to call their own.

Members became discouraged and uncommitted until in 1981, the Society's funds were placed in trust with the Town Office with a stipulation "should the group become reactivated by a group of 15 or more individuals within 20 years, the funds would be released" for their coffers. The Spaulding Memorial Library stored the reference materials and in 1993 a new group was off and running. Again the Grangers invited those interested to gather at their Meeting Room and revitalization began. Included were some charter members and other newer faces. With a sizable donation to invest from Tom Willins Jr., they were given encouragement to raise further funds, search for a building, resume collecting artifacts & research materials, and envision a "museum" someday. A section of the Grange room was made available for shelving donated

from the Library and displays were created for visitors. Guest speakers, programs, and a quarterly newsletter, SEBAGO ECHOES, provided for more visibility. Donations increased as well as the growth of membership. As the Society was experiencing growing pains, there was another group in town with the same problem. The Nazarene Church membership was growing and they proceeded to build a new Church thus vacating their previous building. It was a small church, built as a Baptist Church in 1844. Along with the help of Town Selectman, George Tinkham, the Town of Sebago was able to procure the building which they purchased for the use of the Historical Society. The group was presented with the keys to the building in 1996. One of our decisions upon receiving the use of the building was that the Society would maintain the Sanctuary in its present state as much as possible. The first renovations were

to remove partitions in the Sunday School to create a large display room, for our shelves, and display cases. One of the first items to arrive was a Sebago built double ended row boat donated by Mr. Willins Jr. These boats, made using an original, unique, now famous design were built only at a Boat shop owned by Carlton Martin. At a later date, the Society received a second, similar boat with a straight back stern, making the Society the proud owners of two "Sebago Boats." Another donation, soon to arrive, was a desk which was made by George Babb, a talented craftsman, for use as a Post Office Desk at the Sebago Post Office near Hancock Pond. The Post Mistress, Mary Babb served the local patrons at this desk from 1917 to 1940. About the same time the desk arrived in 1997, another Post Office in North Sebago closed and the Society was given the entire facade of postal boxes,

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service window and entrance door. By removing only one bench in the choir section of the Sanctuary, members recreated the Post Office as nearly as possible to its original appearance. Also obtained were cancellation stamps, scales and other Post Office equipment. Since then, the Society has obtained the Postal Box areas of two other local Post Offices, one from the Convene area and the other from Sebago Center. By using all of these, the Society has developed an interactive presentation for children's groups to experience the historic Postal Service originally located in over twenty or more buildings in



The Sebago Post Office in which the desk #3 was used.



The earliest veterans are honored on one of the two monuments dedicated at a celebration in 1998.

seven areas of the town. With our high school being closed, at the formation of a school district, the Historical Society has become an important repository for the yearbooks, plaques, uniforms, and mementoes important to alumnae. Artifacts from the early Fitch Homestead in East Sebago, owned by one of the most prominent families who helped settle Sebago are also featured.

The gift of the Pump Organ from

the North Sebago Methodist Church is the feature item in a sizable collection of Bibles, and Sunday School items from the four Churches in town. From records, the pews have been labeled as to the owners from 1895. For several summers the Society members have held a "Historic Church Service" replicating one as it might have been in 1895. Parishioners dress in costume, including those representing a deacon, organist, and tithes man. A youngster

is chosen to pull the bell rope, a well prized opportunity. Lining, the method of learning new hymns is taught, using only hymns of the period. As might have occurred at that period the service is followed by lemonade and cookies.

As donations of historical items continued to arrive, the building's capacity was soon reached. By 2002 plans were formulated and accepted by the citizens at Town Meeting that the Society would build a Display Barn for the larger artifacts. With many local businesses volunteering their time and equipment, the next summer a 3 bay carriage type building was completed in time for an August Open House.

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Some townspeople had been waiting for the Society to have room for farm related pieces and again new artifacts found their way to the Society. An important piece to their collection was recognized when a neighboring townsman was salvaging a Sebago Barn and recognized the parts of an attic loom. He reconstructed it to be sure it was complete, then stored it until the Society had room to display it. Now it is part of a farm wife's activities, a participation program for children. Not only do they observe the working "tools" of the housewife but they get a rare opportunity to experience "doing the laundry" before the time of automatic washers. Beginning by pumping water for the wash tub, they then experience the feel and smell of homemade soap on the scrub board, turn the crank on the wringer, take the clothes from the wicker clothesbasket



"Hands on" experiences in the laundry area of the Farmwives exhibit area of the Display Shed.

and hang them using wooden clothespins. Pants stretchers, stretchers for woolen socks, and a curtain stretcher are demonstrated before a sprinkler bottle, and an unheated heavy cast flat iron are put to use.

As lumbering, farming, and fishing were an important part of the lifestyle of early Sebago, a collection of saws, farm implements, cobbler's tools and other craftsman's hand tools are now available for visitors to try their

DEMONSTRATIONS OF SPINNING, RUG HOOKING, CIDER MAKING AND AX GRINDING ROUND OUT SOME OF THE MORE POPULAR PROGRAMS.

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skills at. Ice cutting tools and antique sports equipment bring the chance for conversation among the old timers and the youngsters and all ages love the hand cranked ice cream when we host an Old Fashioned Sunday Ice Cream Party. Demonstrations of spinning, rug hooking, cider making and ax grinding round out some of the more popular programs.

The current featured display is "Summer Guest Homes of Long Ago"

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Churches and Cemeteries of Sebago

The Free Will Baptist Church

was organized by Elders James Fly, Jeremiah Bullock and John Cotton on November 19, 1826 with eight members. The church at its present location (now the Sebago Historical Society) was built in 1844 by Deacon William Haley, John Pugsley and William Whitney, trustees.



presented by
SEBAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2000 Calendar



Pew Owners - July 12, 1895

#1 Fred Hill	#8 George Hanson	#13 George D. Jewell	#19 Charles Weed	#26 Mrs. Calvin Winn
#2 Charles Davis	#9 Charles P. Douglas	#14 Reuben M. Dyer	#20 Henry Spencer	#27 Heirs of John
#3 Charles Davis	#10 O. M. Pike	#15 John H. Whitney	#21 P. W. Sawyer	Pugsley
#4 Perley Jewell	#11 William Haley	#17 F. E. Wentworth	#22 Oliver D. Dike	#28 H. Dike
#5 O. M. Douglas	#12 B. H. Whitney &	#18 John Merserve	#23 Mrs. Rose Gray	#29 R. L. Blake
#6 Morrill Jewell	A. J. Robinson		#24 Charles E. Brown	#30 Mrs. D. P. Stackpole
#7 Orin Douglas &	William Dyer		#25 A. J. Robinson	& O. M. Douglas

including booklets, advertisements, postcards and photographs for many of the boarding establishments. A major project of the Society was the creation of Veteran's Monuments listing all veterans who have entered the service as Sebago residents. The task of researching the names was arduous but one of pride when a dedication was held in a newly formed Village Park. As many other veterans have moved into the town, many retiring here, it was fitting that they also be honored. The Historical Society has made available granite stones to be purchased in honor of any serviceman and placed as a walkway beside the original monuments. The Society members join with the Lion's Club each November to plan a Memorial Service for Veterans'

Day at which time the latest stones are recognized.

Sebago Town Officials have chosen the Society as the keeper of the records for presentation of the Boston Post Cane to the town's oldest resident. Lillian Amrhein, a spry 101 year old is the present holder of the cane with her name added to the honor list in 2001. The original cane is displayed at the Sebago Town Office with a representative cane presented at an Open House celebration in the Society Building for each new recipient. Amrhein is the fifteenth known cane holder from Sebago since the first presentation to Amos Ward in 1909.

The Society continually publishes annual calendars of historical importance which include photographs

with substantiating facts pertinent to them. Thus, each annual theme could be likened to a chapter of Sebago's past. These calendars, along with note cards, local 1871 maps, a Jubilee Cookbook and other booklets are the major fundraisers for the Society. These are going to be of major importance as once again the Historical Society buildings are bulging at the seams bringing expansion plans again to the forefront. If you want to see what a dedicated group can accomplish starting with a small empty church just twelve years ago, COME SEE US NOW! The Society meets on the fourth Wednesday monthly and the museum is open on the second Saturday and fourth Sunday from May through September.