

Winter Harbor Historical Society

P.O. Box 93, Winter Harbor, ME 04693

August 2016

NEWSLETTER

Membership Meeting and Program

August 17th

7:00 pm

Historical Society Museum

The next program sponsored by the Winter Harbor Historical Society will be August 17th at the Museum, Hammond Lane. The guest speaker will be Katherine Heidinger, writer for the *Acadian*, a newsletter published for the former Winter Harbor Security Group Activity. Mrs. Heidinger interviewed several former town residents for the newsletter and she will present her memories of those conversations.

Annual memberships are due at this meeting and we will be voting on a slate of officers. The Historical Society will be recruiting committee members for the program, fundraising, museum, publications and membership committees.

Museum

The museum is open on Saturdays from 1-4pm. Please stop by and enjoy the displays and artifacts. Take time to view some of the taped interviews that were completed for the 'Schoodic' video, but were edited from the final version. We have footage of many notable local historians. The building has ongoing costly maintenance needs and the society board would like to develop additional displays to portray the town's unique past. The historical society board welcomes ideas for making this building accessible and educational.

The museum will not be open on August 13, 2016, as we encourage everyone to enjoy the Winter Harbor Lobster Festival.

Walking Tour

Join Winter Harbor Historical Society Board members in a walk of shared memories throughout the village on August 3 (rain date August 9) at 1pm beginning at the Winter Harbor Town Office.

History on Facebook

Share the Winter Harbor Historical Society's new facebook page with your friends and join in the comments about our past.

Donations

Thank you to Steve & Anna Harris, Grace Gerrish, Sharon Conway and Barbara Tagliarino.

Winter Harbor Historical Society

President: Diana Young

Vice-President: Deborah Joy Martin

Secretary: Pearl Follett Barto

Treasurer: Cathy Lilly Carruthers

Building & Grounds: Brent Hurd

Board Members

Johanna Smith Mary Laury

Dan Keegan

winterharborhistory@gmail.com



Winter Harbor Lighthouse located on Mark Island was built in 1856 and lighted for the first time on January, 1857. It was de-commissioned and sold by the U.S. Government in 1934.

Mark Island Lighthouse

According to Louise Dickinson Rich, "The sea is more than a means of livelihood. It is a Presence, impossible to forget or ignore. It fills the eye and the ear and the mind, stretching blue and boisterous or sullen and gray to the horizon, breaking in great geysers of spray over the reefs. It is never still. Obedient to the moon, it rises to cover the near shore, kelp-clothed ledges. Its voice is always in the ear, sometimes subdued and wooing, sometimes as wild and clamorous as a battle cry."

Mark Island Lighthouse warned mariners of the treacherous ledges from 1857 to 1933. Considered good duty, as the island was just a mile offshore, only nine lighthouse keepers worked during the 76 years of service with Adelbert Leighton tending the light for over 31 of those years. The lighthouse was purchased in 1939 by musician and writer Bernice (Bunny) Richmond and her husband, Reginald Robinson. Bunny maintained a journal of the weather and adventures during her island summers. She published two novels: *Winter Harbor* and *Our Island Lighthouse* about life on the island. Bunny describes the isolation: "without radio, telephone and newspapers, the world was pushed from our shores. The days remained nameless and I wondered if eternity might not be like this." It was often impossible for a boat to land as she watched the high "combers spring up through calm rolling water, break and quickly vanish, as if a magnet had drawn the foam down under." Bunny notes that a photo of the island from 1865 shows boulders more than 10 feet further from her house than they were in 1940. Descriptions of the island have changed from five acres to less than three acres currently.

For \$2,000, in 1953, children's authors; Rene and Pat Prud'hommeaux bought the island, where they lived full time for eighteen years. *The Light in the Tower* retells the tradition of their Christmas tree in the lighthouse tower. Mrs. Prud'hommeaux writes in December 1958: "Arctic sea smoke, sometimes covering all the water like wildfire, walks like tall dignified ghosts past us to the ocean, while we amuse ourselves with the clocking of changes in the wind. Our hope is that everyone else

Winter Harbor Historical Society

P.O. Box 93, Winter Harbor, ME 04693

August 2016

NEWSLETTER

feels as we do, that this is still Winter Harbor Lighthouse-your own, as well as ours." In January of 1960, Bunny Richmond again describes in her Peninsula Gazette, Gordon Prud'homme's attempt to land on Mark Island. As his mother watched, "he was washed off to the east side wearing heavy oil clothes and boots.

Another sea washes him back, but he was unable to hang on to the island ledges. A second sea washed him off, brought him back and then a third." He believed that he would not have survived a fourth.

The lighthouse fell to disrepair until purchased by Winter Harbor resident, William Holden in 1995. Mr. Holden invested substantially to prevent further loss and sold the island in 2004 to William Sofield of New York. Mark Island has found a benefactor to address the constant erosion with cribbing around the perimeter. Solar collectors with battery power storage, stone walkways and a well have been added. Landing on the island has

been improved with automated walkways to a float. We are grateful that this historic structure survives as the sentinel to watch over vessels approaching the coves of Winter Harbor. "Our" island lighthouse will stand for the next generation and inspire future writers and artists.

