

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Most of all, we need your financial help, and membership dues, which are now due, provide almost all of our operating funds. Although our hardworking grant writers have had good success in securing grants in past years, this year our appeals to charitable foundations were unsuccessful. The 1905 building desperately needs to be painted, and none of the 12 or 13 windows work properly. All require prompt remedial work, and all need new screens. Another priority is building a skirt to cover the basement walls and comply with preservation guidelines. Please consider alleviating this problem by adding to your usual membership contribution.

Please consider volunteering a few hours to help solve ongoing physical problems, such as helping Ken Bartow repair all those windows. Alan Douglass, who serves as our building superintendent, has a list of other maintenance good deeds you might perform. Last but not least, if you love history and old documents, consider volunteering to assist our present archivists, Jean Hankins and Ethel Turner, with cataloging and other archival work. No experience is necessary. The archives are open to the public on Wednesdays from 2-4, May 1 to November 1. To volunteer for any of these, call Shirley Hamilton, President, at 627-4458.

FINDING AND RESCUING THE TOWN POUND

One of the Society's big initiatives in 2016 was raising public awareness and recognition of Otisfield's old cattle pound, built in 1818 and surviving still on Bell Hill Road. In preparation for our public program on September 15, OHS directors Alan Douglass, Polly Bartow, and Jean Hankins visited and photographed the Otisfield pound and similar old cattle pounds in other towns, including the round one in Lebanon, New Hampshire. Callie Zilinsky alerted the Otisfield selectmen of our new interest in the pound, which we believed the town still owned. Callie also contacted Christi Mitchell of the Maine Historic Preservation Board for guidance. Our goal was to ensure the preservation of this old landmark and, if possible, to restore it to some semblance of its original appearance and submit it for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.



Otisfield Cattle Pound, Bell Hill Road, taken in 1999.

The selectmen strongly supported our initiative, and during several meetings considered how to proceed to get the lot cleaned up as stipulated by Christi Mitchell. They hired Maine Surveying to research the ownership records. With no deeds delineating the small pound, the selectmen obtained a quit-claim deed from the abutting landowner. Once the lot is cleared, state archaeologists may be able to determine the original plan of the site, including the location of the gate. The town will then be able to make formal application for National Register status. The Historical Society is pleased to be working closely with the town to preserve this prominent landmark, and we are confident that not too far in the future a handsome sign will inform the world of its importance.

PROGRAMS OF THE PAST YEAR

In 2016 we enjoyed a variety of informative programs, starting with Ed Somers' talk in April on old tools. Somers, a Bridgton woodcarver and historian, brought a stageful of his own hand-made woodcrafting tools and was also able to identify most of the ones brought in by the audience. Our June 16 program, held at the Old Town House, focused on a history of Great Oaks Camp. We were delighted to have Jean Smyc attending. Jean, who died during the past year, was the daughter of long-time Great Oaks director Joe Becker. In September a good crowd came to hear Jean Hankins' summary of what she could find out about the Otisfield town pound. Chris Conde finished with an update of recent actions by the selectmen (*See related article above*). Jean Pottle and Jean Hankins delivered a power-point presentation on Mary Pride Knight for the November meeting. While Jean Pottle commented on Mary's writing style and her long life, Jean Hankins focused more on the history of Mary's manuscript diaries, now owned by the Maine Historical Society in Portland.



Special guest Ed Somers demonstrating, with a drawknife, the technique used to remove bark from a piece of wood.

DEREK DELIVERS OTISFIELD HISTORY TO WEBSITE AND YOUTUBE

You may have used our website, www.otisfield.org, but you may not realize that one individual is entirely responsible for producing and managing it. Derek Dorr, the OHS director who lives with wife Jessica on Forrest Edwards Road, deserves all the credit. Over the past few years he's served as our webmaster and has downloaded a multitude of photographs, written articles, and videos, all free for public viewing. We especially encourage you to look at the videos of many past OHS programs. By going to YouTube and then typing in "Otisfield Historical," you can listen and watch Dave Hankins and Howard Dyer explaining how the boundaries of Otisfield came to be drawn; or look at the program we presented on Otisfield's General Stores in 2015. These, and many more, are yours to watch with minimal effort. You can even sign up with YouTube to be notified of any future Otisfield videos. Derek has also created some handy new links to the websites for the Maine Historical Society and the Town of Otisfield. One nifty feature of the MHS website is its Maine Memory Network, which includes many photos of Otisfield's one-room schools. All this, thanks to Derek!



Derek Dorr, OHS director and webmaster

Make sure to check us out online

www.otisfield.org

[Facebook.com/OtisfieldHistoricalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/OtisfieldHistoricalSociety)

[Instagram.com/otisfieldhistorical](https://www.instagram.com/otisfieldhistorical)

[YouTube.com/OtisfieldHistorical](https://www.youtube.com/OtisfieldHistorical)

PROGRAMS FOR 2017

In April Pat Shearman, Oxford County Register of Deeds, and Jennifer Dilworth, Register of Probate, will explain how to research land records and probate records on-line, a valuable skill for genealogists and historians. In June we plan to bring a room-full of old photographs, objects, and papers up from the archives to the first floor of the of the Town House to give folks a chance to see and handle these treasures without trudging downstairs. In September Jean Hankins will review her 25 years of research into the town poor and offer some new conclusions. Our last 2017 program, on November 16, will be a group effort to understand William Spurr, the enigmatic author of *The History of Otisfield*.

CURRENT OHS OFFICERS

President - Shirley Hamilton

Vice-President - Callie Zilinsky

Secretary - Jean Pottle

Treasurer - Polly Bartow

Archivists - Jean Hankins, Ethel Turner

Directors - Derek Dorr, Alan Douglass,

Genise Stern, Celeste Hyer



One of the photos Ethel Bean Turner donated to the OHS recently. Undated, it shows famous news commentator Lowell Thomas visiting the Cape during a Maine fishing trip organized by Lake Thompson Fish and Game. Eva Elliot, the owner of the Cape until her death in 1946, is shown in background

Calendar For 2017

All programs start at 7 p.m.

April 20th - How To Research Oxford County Records Online with Pat Sherman and Jennifer Dilworth - Community Hall

June 22nd - What's In Those Boxes: Otisfield Archives 101- Old Town House

July 9th - Strawberry Festival - Old Town House 4:30-6:30

September 21st - Another Look At The Otisfield Poor, 1798-1924 - Old Town House

November 16th - William Spurr: Town Historian, Town Character - Community Hall