

THE GATES HOUSE

# THE TIDE



MARGARETTA and UNITY  
June 12, 1775

Semiannual Newsletter of the Machiasport Historical Society  
Volume XXVIII No. 2 Fall 2019  
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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

First I wish to thank all that sent donations to our Society this year. Our treasurer, Bob Mercer was impressed with the response last spring, and let me know the tremendous support we have. Those donations came at a critical time. We started the year without electricity in the Gates House. After the review by the electrician, we are fortunate to still have the house. The bare wires and open fuses were attended to right away, and we could all breathe easier. The rest of the season has been mostly ups and a few downs.



We had a good year with guests and friends that wanted to study their family roots. We were able to give tours in both houses four afternoons a week along with some special events. In June we had a lovely afternoon tea designed by Sandra Campbell. This year's Early Summer Tea had an historical theme, and the tables had pictures of some of America's early presidents and statesmen.



photo by Beverly Mouradjian



Frank Foster,  
Boston Post Cane Recipient  
photo by Melissa Castro

In July we presented Frank Foster with the Boston Post Cane. His family was able to be with him, and he told us some of the story of his life from graduations to World War adventures to his work in the years to follow. Frank is kept updated as to the Society and



photo by Sarah Dedmon



photo by Rick Heller

how we are managing its programs. Later in July we had the Open House weekend and honored Frank again with cake and ice cream.

Of course August was dedicated to preparations for the Lobster Lunch. What a day!! The fire pit crew took care of peeling the corn while the fire got up to the point that the huge lobster



Lobster Lunch - Cooper House Tour

pot was hot enough. Andy Hutnik set up his big tent for guests to sit under that day. Before any guests came a gust of wind came up the bay, flipped the tent completely over, and set it down on the tables where guests like to sit. It was decided to take the tent down so it would not happen while guests were there. When it came time to start serving the meals I think all 200 guests arrived at the same time because it was nonstop once we started to serve the meals. We had a very successful day. We have since evaluated the activity of the day and hope to be better prepared for the number of patrons. Of course we will order the same gorgeous day.

Another thrilling day was in September when the Model T Ford Association members came. That was the day of Hurricane Dorian. They did not want to drive the Model Ts that day, so they put them in trailers and secure places, but the drivers came anyway. We had a wonderful time with about 50 guests, and they were not in a hurry. They visited both houses and told us interesting things about other places they have been. Also in September

we set up a very attractive table for the Machias Fiber Festival. They give us a wonderful spot to display some of the beautiful gowns, lace, dresses, jackets, and items that families have given us. It is a very enriching day.



We have started a relationship with the Reenactor Gentlemen and Women of our local Revolutionary War Reenactors of Downeast Maine. They are concerned that our residents are not aware of the rich history of this area. This group is growing fast and we want to be a part of the education they wish to bring especially to the young people. That would be people from birth to 100. They like to shoot their cannons out over the bay.

Thank you again for your support, Barbara Maloy

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**DUES REMINDER**

Again, thank you to those who have paid their dues for the 2019-2020 year. For those who may have forgotten, our by-laws specify that if a member has not paid dues for two years, they are to be dropped from the membership roll. Life members do not pay annual dues. Please use the enclosed dues slip and along with your check return both to the Machiasport Historical Society, P.O. Box 301, Machiasport, ME 04655.

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**YOU ARE INVITED** to our *Annual Christmas Party* on December 1<sup>st</sup>, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at The Gates House. Join this family fun celebration to bring in the Christmas Season, with mulled cider, holiday food treats, live pump organ music and festive carol singing!

\* \* \* \* \*

**MACHIASPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY VISION ALIVE & WELL - by Shar Landers**



*Christmas Party Family*



*Sister Volunteers*



*Young Historian*



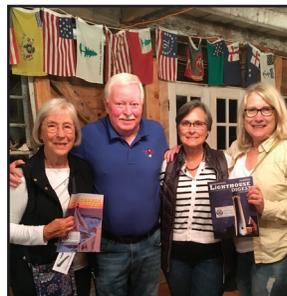
*WA Student Docents*



*Explorers*



*Booth at Margarett Days*



*Lighthouse Program*

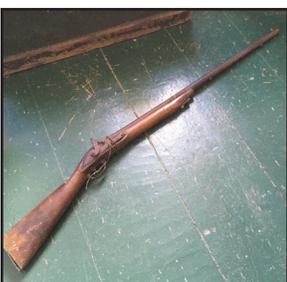


*Volunteer Appreciation Dinner*

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**RECENT ACQUISITIONS**

by Celeste Sherman



*"Brown Bess"*

**"Brown Bess" that may have belonged to Isaac Larrabee who lived in Machiasport and served in the Revolution:** David Huntley of North Cutler donated a British made musket from the Revolutionary War period. The highly modified smooth bore 75 caliber flintlock, cut down and converted to percussion, is stamped "Tower London George Rex". He, a descendant of Isaac Larrabee, says the musket was found under the floor boards in a home in Cutler and the family believes it was handed down from Isaac through his son Abner's family.



*John Shaw's Half Boats*

**Three "half models" of ships built by John Shaw with his "caulking mallet":** A large box arrived this summer with half models of the schooner FRANK, built in Machias in 1869; an unknown schooner, and the larger brigantine BONNYDOON built in 1876. A well-used mallet bears the tag "caulking mallet used by master ship builder John Shaw, Steuben, ME 1820-Machias ME 1902". These models were used instead of drawn plans to actually construct the ships. Put together in layers, each layer was "lifted" off the model

to provide scaled dimensions for that section to be built. The donor, William I. Gies II of Pennsy these lovely models in memory of James T. Gies and Margaret S. Gies.



Research indicates that John Shaw was a prominent Machias business man, Masonic officer and builder of over 50 ships. His daughter, Helen Mary Shaw, registrar of the Hannah Weston Chapter of the D.A.R. beginning in 1912, established his descent from Francis Shaw, Sr. who lived in Boston next to Paul Revere during the Revolution and was a member of the Order of the Cincinnati. Francis Shaw, Jr. was an original settler in Goldsborough, Maine, and obtained the rank of Major during the Revolution.



Priscilla Norton's Coverlet

**“Blue and white coverlet” woven by Priscilla Hanscom Norton of Machias circa 1830-40:**

We also received a package from the Historical Society of Cheshire County, New Hampshire, containing a large woven coverlet in almost perfect condition. There was no explanation except 2 tags that read:

1. “Gift of Mrs. Paul Sibley, Richmond. Coverlet, c. 1830- hand woven in blue on white. Woven by Priscilla Hanscom Norton of Machias, ME, great grandmother of Mrs. Nancy Sibley.”
2. “Gift of Mrs. Paul Sibley, Richmond, NH, hand woven bedspread c 1840.”

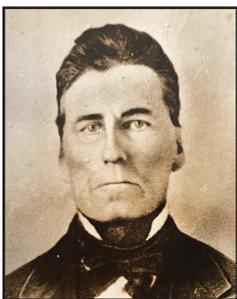
Henna Castro, our corresponding secretary, has sent a thank you letter requesting any additional information that may be available. We have tentatively identified Priscilla Hanscom Norton as the daughter of Ebenezer Hanscom, lumberman, and Frances Downs Nash, born in Crawford in 1827. She married William H. Norton circa 1848 in East Machias and later lived in Needham, MA. She died in Worcester, MA, in 1907. Her children listed are James John Edgar Norton, 1850-1932; Philomena Norton, 1852-?; William H. Norton, Jr., 1859-1914 and Daisy N. Norton, 1869-1879.

Do any of our readers have more information on this family?

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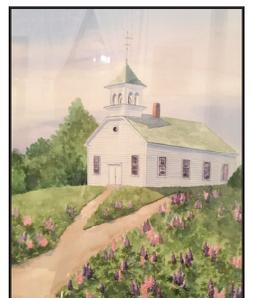
**EARLY LIFE OF REV. CHARLES EMMERSON**  
by Celeste Sherman

(unknown transcriber of below Writings of Reverend Emerson dated 1832 as appear in italics)



Rev. Charles Emerson

Reverend Charles Emerson became a Baptist preacher and his father and brother donated land from what was called Emerson Farms. Here was built the first Baptist Church in Machias with Charles as the minister. This was known as the East Side Baptist Church in Machiasport. The exact date of the formation of the church is unknown but the first burial in the in its graveyard was in 1818.



East Side Baptist Church

A handwritten family tree accompanies the typewritten transcription. William Emerson, from Weare, NH, married Anna B. Parker, daughter of Stephen and Elizabeth Parker, and move to Machias (now Machiasport on the East Side), Maine. They had the following children: Betsy who m. Charles Dawes; Parker who was lost at sea; Sally; Susan who m. Jacob Huntley; Ruth who m. Israel Hovey; Charles who m. Elizabeth Foster (daughter of Capt. Ebenezer Foster who lived in New York when not at sea); John who m. Susan Foster; Hannah; and Anna S. P. who m. Joshua Denison.

It is said that Charles’s father, William Emerson, having lost one son at sea asked Charles not to return to a life at sea but become a farmer and stay on land. This “Early Life of Rev. Charles Emerson as transcribed from writings of Reverend Emerson dated 1832...errors and omissions will be noticed “ gives details of this decision and his journey to find his faith and begin his ministry. We will include some excerpts in this and future issues. The entirety can be read at the Gates House.

*“In recording a few incidents of my life I am induced to do it from the hope that it may awaken in me a deep sense of my obligation to God had compassion upon me a monunt(?) Of his saving grace.*

*I was born in Machias, County of Washington, the then District now State of Maine on the fifth day of September 1794. My parents, Wm. And Anna Emerson were natives of New Hampshire. My mother’s name was Anna Parker...who descended from an ancient family in England. Soon after the marriage of my parents they removed from the town of Weare in NH to Machias. There were nine children of us, three sons and six daughters. My mother died when I was about seven years old. My father was left to provide for a numerous family at a time when they needed the assistance of Mother as well as Father to provide for them and instruct them in the principles of virtue and piety. My mother was a member of a Congregational Church in the Town and left satisfactory evidence that she exchanged a compatible for an incompatible inheritance. About two years after the death of my Mother my Father married a second wife. My father would occasionally call his children around him at evening and have them the Lord’s Prayer but as he was ...a professor of religion its duties were not much attended...the family....*

*While working in the woods often have I selected a place for secret prayer...In this way I lived until eighteen years of*

age. Sometimes for six months I would resort to watch over my tongue and use no profane language and I believe that during my whole life I scarce give way to this vice but I felt approved.

At the age of eighteen I left home shipped aboard a vessel bound for Boston. This was during the late war with England. When we arrived in Boston instead of the vessel returning home as I expected...was sent to Baltimore. I continued in her and returned to Boston sometime in January, as there was no opportunity of getting a passage home at that season of the year. I shipped on board the brig Esrep(?) bound for France loaded with cotton wool. We set sail on the 11 of March 1813 and got clear of the American coast undiscovered by the British, nothing material had occurred until the second day of April when we discovered a large sail which proved to be a British Frigate. She immediately gave us chase but as we could lie nearer the wind than the Frigate and our vessel being an excellent sailer after 8 or 10 hours chase they gave up the pursuit.... This time our Capt. Ordered the deck to be cleared of...encumbrance, accordingly our guns were thrown overboard, water casks, stove, anchors cut away so as to lighten our vessel as much as possible. We were already in the Bay of Biscay off the coast of France, and had got soundings two or three days before, but on the appearance of every sail we altered our course to avoid them. Two days after this occurrence... in the morning the man at the mast head descov'd a sail very near us. It proved to be his British Majesty's Frigate Commache, the weather being thick she was not observed until within a short distance of us and the wind being light we were soon overtaken and made prisoners of war.

From this time the scene of suffering and distress commenced which did not end for more than two years. All hands were ordered into the boat but the Captain and the cook and put on board the frigate where we were.... Closely guarded a few hours, and then sent on board a Gun Brig to be carried to the fleet which lay in Basque roads blockading the city of Rochelle and the French fleet which were moored above the ports. In two or three days we arrived in the Roads where lie the Royal Sovereign 110 gunship Bulwark seventy four and some smaller vessels. Our crew were divided between the two ships of the line. Myself with a number of others were put on board the Royal Sovereign—While on board this ship we were allowed our liberty and received as good treatment as we could expect from our enemies. Our allowance however was very scanty and here for the first time in my life I began to feel the effects of hunger. As we had not been on allowance during our voyage the contrast was very great and very much increased our sufferings. One evening while sitting on the deck with one of my shipmates who felt the keen demand of appetite as well as myself, he proposed to me to go and try to purchase some bread. He gave me a shilling and I immediately went to the Steward and made known my wishes. He filled a small bag with broken bread but would take nothing for it. This gave us a hearty meal, at another time I exchanged knives with one of the ship's crew and received a pint of wine and as much bread as I could eat, by such means I continued to satisfy my craving appetite occasionally—after having been on board this ship about a month a circumstance occurred which gave me opportunity of witnessing a preparation for action. Early in the evening a signal was made from the vessels who were on the lookout that the French fleet was coming out. All hands were immediately called, hammocks piped up and stowed in the netting in the waist, decks were cleared for action, the anchor hove up, match tubs placed by the guns, boarding pikes, cutlasses and all in readiness. During the bustle a number of things were thrown overboard from the gun room and other places where they were supposed to be in the way. The prisoners were ordered to carry their baggage on deck and stow it in one of the large boats, everything was in readiness and all waiting the orders of the admiral when about eleven or twelve o'clock orders were given move the ship, pipe the hammocks below, set the watch and the remainder of the crew to retire to rest. The sail that caused all this stir we afterwards heard was an American vessel which in the bustle got clear of the fleet.

After being kept on board the Royal Sovereign about six weeks we were put on board a frigate in the lower hole, sent to another part of the British fleet which lie off Breast and from thence to Plymouth England. There we were put on board the T..ton Prison ship which lay in a place called saltash, a little above the Town. Here we remained about two months and a half... From this place

Were sent by land to the Stapleton Prison near the city of Bristol; here were three prisoners and about five thousand French prisoners. They were employed in different kinds of work, some braiding straw for hats and bonnets, some in bone work—others at shoemaking, hair work. Some trading (?) all concerned to be employed at some kind of business. The American prisoners soon learnt to work at different kinds of trade by which they were enabled to supply themselves pretty comfortably with provisions with what was allowed them. This was a pleasant situation for a prison. There was but a single wall to enclose it and being near the city of Bristol, large numbers of gentlemen and ladies were round on the walls almost every fair day in the week to see the prisoners and purchase articles from them. There was also a market in the yard which enclosed the Commissary and turnkey's house where great numbers of people came daily on week days to trade with the prisoners a certain number of which were allowed to go out and trade. In this Prison I was taken sick and put into the hospital where I remained twenty four days. On entering this hospital the prisoner is striped of every article of clothing, put into a warm bath a clean shirt provided and a bed where he continues until he is able to sit up; a sick dress is then provided which he must wear until discharged. WE were kept in this prison until the subjugation of Bonaparte when the French prisoners were sent home. The American prisoners were then all sent to Dartmoor Prison which lies sixteen miles from Plymouth and twenty four from Dartmouth. In his prison I remained until the war ended. A gloomy solitary place, there were five or six thousand prisoners during my confinement. In this prison I do not recollect of seeing any visitors on the walls but once, and there were only two except the Officers and Soldiery. Here the prisoners could do but little or nothing to earn money as there was no market for such articles as they could manufacture. Before leaving this wretched place we prisoners had an opportunity of testing British honor. What I am about to mention was transacted after the articles of Peace were signed. For a pretend offence of the Prisoners the Commandant of the prison ordered the soldiers to fire upon them in consequence of such inhuman treatment seven of our number were shot down dead and several others died of their wounds. It is not probable that at the time one fourth part of the prisoners knew for what reason they were fired upon. Such is man when they possess power which they are permitted to use with impunity.

On the first day of May 1815 I was released from this scene of suffering.” (To be continued)