

ELIOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

March 3, 2014 Minutes
John F. Hill Grange Hall

Meeting was opened at 7PM by President Adams. A moment of silence was observed in honor of member John T. Sullivan who had recently passed.

There was a motion made by Denny Lentz to send a \$25 donation from the Society to the Epilepsy Foundation in honor of John Sullivan. The Society voted unanimously to send the donation.

REPORTS

Minutes of the February meeting were read and approved.

- The Treasurer's Report was given by Toni Searles and was approved as read. (see attached)
- Correspondence was received from Great Works Regional Land Trust thanking us for our donation and a copy of their newsletter; Portsmouth Athenaeum program brochure; Membership request from Kittery Historical and Naval Museum. The newsletters and program were made available for members to read and/or take with them.
- Sylvia Moynahan called for memberships and reminded people that dues are \$10 *a year* and a life-time membership is \$50 for an individual.
- Cindy Lentz reported that the Fundraising Committee is looking for new members. A House tour is being set up with a garden tour and tea. She thanked Helen Gorranson for making the posters for the recent Antiques Appraisal.
- The president reported that the Annual Audit has been completed by auditor Julie Johnson and the Society has a letter in hand stating she "found no discrepancies in any of the documentation."

NEW BUSINESS

- Paul Johnson spoke of an upcoming trip to Foxwoods Casino that people from the Historical Society are invited to. It was requested they see him to sign up if interested.
- Rosanne Adams asked members if they would be interested in co-sponsoring an event with the Eliot Baha'i Community. A public showing of "Luminous Journey" the story of Abdu'l-Baha's visit to the West, visit with Sarah Farmer in Eliot; featuring scenes shot in Eliot at Green Acre with residents and Baha'is in period costume will be held at the Library on March 30th. A motion was made and passed by the membership.
- The President thanked Julie Johnson for tonight's refreshments and announced that Margie and Skip Brown and ~~Carol~~ *Dorothy* Hansen have the refreshments for April 7th

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- Seeing no other business before the Society the meeting was closed and the President turned the meeting over to Carol Zamarchi who introduced the speaker for the evening – James Pope – “The Pope of Eliot”.
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- Jim entertained us with stories of his time working as lighthouse keeper at Whaleback Lighthouse which is now owned by the town of Kittery. He served in the Coast Guard from 1958-1962 and was at Whaleback for 2 ½- 3 years. There were 4 young men to man the lighthouse with 3 of them there at any given time. The shift was 24 days on and 6 days off. There was no running water, no showers or toilet and needless to say the smell could get pretty rank. They each received \$77.10 for food and lived on short lobsters, spam, and deviled ham. He had an Amoskeg skiff which he tied up at Frisbee’s wharf. The men would pool their money and make the trip in to get food – which included quite a bit of beer as well. He would also make clandestine trips out to Gerrish Island to “entertain” or was it to be “entertained by” the girls.

The lighthouse was built in 1872, was 76’ high and equipped with a 150 watt light bulb and a 4th order Fresnel lens which could throw its light 16-17 miles out from shore. That lens, which ran on liquid mercury, is now at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem. The brass on the lens had to be shined every day and the windows washed. Some days it would be down to 9 degrees out there on the ledge but it had to be done. During a storm the waves would reach right up to the top level. It was quite an experience.

There were 2 generators that charged a bank of batteries and 2 diesels that ran 2 air compressors to blow the horn which gave 2 (10 second) blasts every minute (2). In a Northeaster that horn could be heard as far away as Dover and sometimes blew for 24 hours straight in foggy weather. The tower consisted of an office, galley, lantern room and sleeping quarters. A ladder from the galley ran up the outside walls to the lantern room. The window sills were 6-7 feet wide and they would sit out there and fish with a jig and a rod, pulling polluck up the side of the tower. They had a crank phone used to communicate with the head office.

A 40 foot tanker would bring out the gasoline for the generators and put into a tank. The men would transfer it to bottles for use in the potbellied kerosene stove that they used for heat and the gas refrigerator. Another boat would periodically bring out fresh water to be put into a cistern for their use.

The first lighthouse there was built by a local carpenter and washed away. The present tower was built with granite blocks, dovetailed so they won’t pull out and ruff raft placed around the bottom of the tower.

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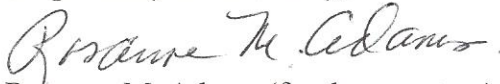
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In the fall of 1969 the tank and machinery were taken out and everything else was thrown overboard – dishes, fixtures, everything. They were not allowed to take anything with them. What treasures are now at the bottom of the waters! The only thing there now on the island is the unmanned tower.

From Whaleback Jim went on to serve on the steam tug “Pegasus” which was 120 feet long for 6-7 years and ran the tug “Portsmouth” for another 6-7 years. He still keeps in touch with the main office in Portsmouth and knows about all the comings and goings in the Portsmouth Harbor.

Following questions the meeting proceeded to refreshments served by Julie Johnson.

Respectfully submitted by,



Rosanne M. Adams (for the secretary)