

ELIOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Minutes of the meeting – November 3, 2014 John F. Hill Grange Hall, Eliot, ME

President Rosanne Adams welcomed the large crowd of attendees. There were more than 60 people present thanks to the newspaper coverage of the evening's speaker.

Secretary's Report – The minutes of the October meeting were read and approved.

Treasurer's Report – The balance in the savings account as of 10/31/14 was \$23,756.77, with earned interest of \$2.01. The balance in the certificate of deposit was \$10,784.73, with interest of \$3.54. The checking account balance was \$8,390.29 after debits for rentals, electricity and decorations for the No. 8 Schoolhouse, and credits for book sales and raffle earnings. The report was approved as presented.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no reports presented to allow for more time for the evening's program.

New Business – Carolyn Bogh announced the upcoming trip to Portland to visit the Victoria Mansion, which was built in 1858. This was formerly the Morse-Libby House and was refurbished so is now known as the Victoria Mansion. The trip is on Tuesday, December 16th, and the cost is \$15 admission or \$13.50 for senior citizens. There was a sign-up sheet for those interested.

Carolyn also commented on the front-page article in the Sentinel about the evening's program.

Rosanne noted that the EHS is supporting its 4th eagle scout. The current one has adopted a cemetery on Wildbrook Lane where her great-great grandmother is buried. She was married to one of the Frosts.

Rosanne thanked those who provided refreshments for the evening and then introduced Tad Emerson Baker, who has been involved in the archeological digs at the Chadbourne site in South Berwick and other projects in Eliot. He is the author of *The Devil of Great Island – Witchcraft and Conflict in Early New England*, which was published in 2007 and most recently has completed *The Storm of Witchcraft – The Salem Trials and the American Experience*.

Mr. Baker, who is a professor at Salem State College, discussed both of these works and read from his newest one. *The Devil of Great Island* presents the fears and

superstition that overtook one town and then spread elsewhere in New England, showing the workings of early American society.

His newest work shows that witchcraft trials were not unique to Salem, Massachusetts. In fact, there were more than 100,000 people tried and about half of them executed in Europe during the witch-hunting era. So why has Salem been labeled "The Witch City"? Baker's book describes the fall of the Massachusetts Bay Colony from being a utopian experiment to a place where, two generations later, witches were being executed. His work describes the political factors and inconsistencies and miscarriages of justice that accompanied the witch trials in Salem. This is a story of individuals jockeying up the political ladder using the trials as a platform to help them rise to power. Some of the cast of characters came from Maine, since during these times settlers left Maine for safer locations in Massachusetts because of the wars with the native Americans and Canadians. In Massachusetts, however, there was corruption and the need for leaders to control people. The trials were fraudulent in many ways. There needed to be 2 eye-witnesses to black magic for a case to come to trial, which hardly ever happened, so confessions were obtained through torture, although no one's sanity was questioned. Ironically, those who confessed were not put to death, so they were incited to confess for that reason alone. Of the 19 executed in Salem Village, they all pled not guilty. Reverend Hale wrote in his book, which was published in 1702 after his death, "The best of people are killed by the witch trials." These trials marked the end of Puritanism. Baker cites example after example of misinformation by prominent people, grandstanding by those wishing to raise their public status, political pressures locally and abroad, even physical factors such as hallucinatory mold in bad bread, and military and religious people trying to rise to power, all leading to a perfect storm for the witchcraft calamities. Baker's book brings out that even though this took place in the late 1600's, connections can be made with current events. The book is available for sale via the Internet or at local bookstores.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Goransson - Secretary