

## **ELIOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Minutes of the meeting – May 4, 2015**

John F. Hill Grange Hall, Eliot, ME

In the absence of all other officers except the Secretary, Zip Zamarchi volunteered to preside over the meeting, which he called to order around 7:05 p.m. There were 32 people present.

**Secretary's Report** – Helen Sullivan read the secretary's report of the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, as she was acting secretary at that meeting. The minutes were approved as read.

**Treasurer's Report** – Treasurer's report for the period April 1-30, 2015 was read and approved. See attached.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Public Relations and Programs Committee** – Carolyn Bogh reminded us that the second graders will be at the Schoolhouse on May 15<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. and all are invited. Our perennial "school marm" Jeanette Paul will be there, as well as Paul Johnson to describe how the school was restored, while Denny Lentz will talk about the Historical Society and Sally Hartford will provide her ginger cookies.

Next month's program will feature Rolf Voltaire and Laura Burnham who have letters and bills of sale dating back to the 1700's which they will donate to the Historical Society but will also talk about them. Some have links to the Bartlett family of Eliot. July we will not have a meeting and August is the annual picnic at Dead Duck Inn. In September Zip Zamarchi will be showing and telling us about his bikes and that meeting will be at their home. In October we have Jules Weyers who was scheduled to speak this winter at the meeting that was cancelled due to snow. In November Dick McKenney will be talking about the history around his former Goodwin Road property. December is the annual holiday party.

**Fundraising Committee** – The yard sale will be held on June 6<sup>th</sup> at the Schoolhouse and there were informational flyers available at the meeting. Items may be brought in during the week prior to the yard sale. There is also a rain date of the following Saturday. Again, bakers and helpers are needed for that day and some of the days prior to the event in preparation for the sale.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Cindy Lentz is recovering from surgery and we wished her a speedy recovery.

Ruth Drake said that someone contacted her to see if the Historical Society could research a house.

The annual budget for the Historical Society that will be requested of the town is around the same, approximately \$3200.

The business portion of the meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m. Helen Sullivan and Helen Goransson were thanked for providing the refreshments.

## **Program**

Lee Downer provided the evening's program. An Air Force Major General, he has been a combat flyer in Vietnam and also served in Desert Storm. His presentation was about the evolution of our country's air force. He has studied and written about American military airpower. He retired after 33 years in the Air Force and has worked in the defense industry and teaches at Old Dominion University in Virginia.

He summed up in his talk that the creation of the Air Force as it exists today took three types of people: visionaries, activists, and practitioners. In his opinion, the number one visionary was Billy Mitchell. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this person from Wisconsin who was rich and influential was someone who became passionate about airplanes and their potential use in battle. After being a soldier himself and also learning to fly, he served in France as our country's chief of air service in Europe. He was fearless, flew missions, became a hero, and understood air power's capabilities. He was a critic of surface navy and the army and wanted to prove that airplanes could sink ships. He was court-martialed for insubordination in 1925 and died in 1936 before he could see he was proven to be right. But he was a true visionary. Eventually the country realized this and Mitchell was posthumously promoted to a 2-star general.

Visionaries need activists to turn the vision to reality, so it was the cadre of air heroes that became the activists, people by the name of Arnold, St.Clair, Eaker, Spatz, Bisell and others who flew missions to places like Alaska to prove the point. Many of them became World War II heroes.

The practitioners did the day-to-day work and took the orders to make the planes achieve more and more. Those who distinguished themselves from this category include Jimmy Dolittle who led a raid in World War II off an aircraft carrier, Chennault

with the Flying Tigers, Westover and others. In the 1920s when the enemy started sinking battleships aircraft carriers were built. The 1920's were filled with air power stories. These activists and practitioners needed to convince Congress, the press and the American people. So they did fantastic feats like flying coast to coast, and then around the world, which took 6 months. Pan American had a goodwill tour and then traveled around Latin America, and then to Hawaii in the Bird of Paradise. They performed some amazing rescue missions, too, which provided great press. They had a 150 hour flight which involved refueling mid-air by small planes carrying hoses. In 1931, another publicity stunt was to fly 672 planes over all the major cities, which was quite the spectacle. By 1932, Chennault showed us the first precursors to the Thunderbirds – fighter planes flying in formation. In 1934, planes were even used briefly to deliver the mail. These practitioners and activists helped in the formation of the air force.

Other visionaries of note were Frank Andrews, who died in a crash but had his own group of activists, Hap Arnold who was a party boy and joker, and Hal George who built a global air transport command. Eventually the country became convinced that this was an air force that was supporting America, and not just the Army. By 1947, the Air Force was completely separate from the Army.

Future visionaries will be needed for the likes of cyber warriors, unmanned flying vehicles, and outer space.

Currently, Lee is writing fiction using these historical characters in his stories.

Respectfully submitted,  
Helen Goransson, Secretary