

The Dash

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Cheehawk Farm

THE LITTLE LIFE OF A BIG FARMHOUSE

BY LYNN SULLIVAN

EVERY HOUSE TELLS A STORY. A story of a home's creation and evolution over time, families that lived there and their experiences, and the struggles and successes all create a complex tale of the human condition. Houses might seem like inanimate structures, but as I have learned they live and breathe the lives of those that lived in them. Without people, houses die; they wither and lose their own willingness to live. Things fall apart quickly.

Cheehawk Farm sits at the end of a dirt road about a quarter of a mile off the South Freeport Road. My parents, John and Shirley Sullivan, purchased the house in 1982 and spend 18 months fixing it up. Today, the house is a two-and-a-half story white clapboard colonial-style farmhouse with red doors, consisting of 86 acres (once 89 but I took three to build a home on my parent's property), with much of the land wooded, and about 15 or so acres of mowed lawn. The man-made pond that is situated to the northwest of the house is mostly dried up



Cheehawk farmhouse in 1980.

FROM THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF LYNN SULLIVAN

now due to a breach in the dam and the change in climate. The house is now nearly 6,000 square feet of living area. But that is not what the farm used to look like. What the original building looked like is uncertain, but it was a Maine farm, so it is safe to assume it was a one and a half story cape-type home – like many of the homes in South Freeport.

Many of the residents have connections to world events and important Freeport names. Benjamin Waite created the 89-acre farm by buying land from a Moses Griffin and a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

SPRING 2023

The Dash is published by Freeport Historical Society for its members.

Freeport Historical Society
Harrington House
45 Main Street
Freeport, ME 04032
(207) 865-3170
www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org

OFFICE & EXHIBIT HOURS

Tuesday – Friday:
10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Check our events calendar for exciting upcoming events and programs.

Research and visits involving the collection require an appointment in advance. Please call 207-865-3170 or email info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org

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Executive Director
director@freeporthistoricalsociety.org

Audrey Wolfe,
Collections & Education Manager
library@freeporthistoricalsociety.org

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Dear Members,

AS I SIT DOWN TO WRITE TO YOU, snow is falling gently ahead of a predicted nor'easter, but I know as March marches on it will be a few short weeks before we'll see the first greens shoots of daffodils and tulips along the foundation of Harrington House and the fields at Pettengill Farm.

Our staff and trustees have been busy through the winter planning for the year ahead, as you will read in our upcoming programs and events, and we're eager to see many of you in person in the coming weeks and months.

A new generation of Freeport scholars and researchers lead our Spring programs. You'll read a portion Lynn Sullivan's great research on the Cheehaak family of South Freeport (page 1) and you can watch her full presentation on our website. Susanna Hancock will share insights from her historic arctic expedition last year on April 4 (page 6). Each of these programs asks us to rethink what we know about people and places that seem familiar or foreign to us, and introduce new facts uncovered by either looking in new places or simply asking new questions.

While it may be unsettling, history is as fluid as our present moment. History is not simply the record of what happened, it's the story we tell through a selected set of facts. Sometimes that selection of facts is what we choose in order to craft the best story; sometimes that selection of facts is all we know, until we learn more. It's critical for us to reexamine our history, both to incorporate what we continue to learn, as well as to look through the ever-changing lens of our current context to see how our view of the past enlarges.

One topic we will spend time reexamining this year is our understanding of indigenous history in the land we call Freeport. Like most New England historical societies, we were founded to preserve the stories of European set-

tlers and their descendants. That story includes the changing names of this place from the Harraseeket District of North Yarmouth, Massachusetts to the Town of Freeport in the State of Maine. But we know that 400 years of history is only the most recent chapter of thousands of years of human habitation in this land. As an organization dedicated to the history of this place and its people, we should know



more than we do about the people and cultures that preceded European settlement, as well as a clear understanding of the impact of that settlement on the land and the people.

You'll hear more throughout the year on our efforts to expand our understanding of our whole history, digging into our collections to rediscover what may have been overlooked, and examining how and why we've told our histories in particular ways at particular times. I'm looking forward to these opportunities for growth for our organization because, just like this coming season, you never know what will spring up if we keep our eyes open for the possibility of something new.

I look forward to seeing you at our Annual Meeting April 29 (page 4), or one of our other events soon!

— ERIC C. SMITH,
Executive Director

Cheehawk Farm

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Benjamin Parker Jr. Waite's ancestors fled Portland, then Falmouth, Massachusetts, when the British burned the town down in 1775 during the American Revolution. Benjamin's son Charles inherited the house and married Olive Pettingill in 1824. They lived at Cheehawk until 1842, when the Waite's sold to Ezekiel Merrill, who farmed it until 1876. The farm then passes to Sidney Soule, son of Francis B. Soule of the shipbuilding Soules. Sidney was born to Francis Bartol Soule and Eliza Waite, one of the daughters of Charles and Olive Waite.

The sale of Cheehawk in 1920 passed through three hands on the same day in a deal that ultimately saw the home owned by a Josephine Dyer. She lived in it for a decade before selling it to two of the three Cheehawk sisters, 37-year-old Antoinette and 32-year-old Alberta. Antoinette and Alberta, along with their sister, 35-year-old Emma, and their widowed mother, Louise, moved into the home.



Cheehawk farmhouse today.

PHOTO BY LYNN SULLIVAN

Medical Center. What set the sisters and their mother apart, though, was that they were Czechoslovakian. Although the sisters were born in New York City, they embraced their Bohemian roots and ancestry of their parents, both of whom came to America in 1888 from different regions of Slovakia and at different times on the *SS Moravia*.

Last year alone, five now-Carroll University students received money from the Fund. The Cheehawk sisters' legacy lives on. Just as they lived together they are buried together on the property.

John and Shirley Sullivan have lived in the house for 40 years now. They too will leave their legacy and imprint on the home. A home that has witnessed a great deal over the more than 200 years of its life. Two hundred years of stories. FHS

THE CHEEHAWKS MAY have been different from most of the residents in this town, but they cherished many of the same ideas and notions. They embraced family fiercely, worked hard, and placed a significant emphasis on education. In 1955, at the age of 82, Louise became a US citizen just one year before her death. In addition to a love of Bohemian culture, Louise instilled in her daughters the importance of an education. In 1977, Alberta, in a deal that had been in the works for a year, transferred Cheehawk to Carroll College in Waukesha, Wisconsin, also giving the seed money to establish the Cheehawk Scholarship Fund. The proceeds from the sale of the house in 1982 to the Sullivans, permanently endowed the scholarship.



Unidentified Cheehawk family member.

FROM THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF LYNN SULLIVAN

In 1933, the one-and-a-half-story cape caught fire. The home was saved and was rebuilt as the two-and-a-half story cape that it is today.

Alberta gave up her stake in Cheehawk in 1935, moving to Boston to work for the Government Publishing Office on a book-binding project. She would return to Cheehawk permanently as early as 1950, if not earlier. While in South Freeport, the Cheehawk's made a living by cleaning houses, selling apples and cheese, and cobbling together a life. Antoinette at one point worked at Maine

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL MEETING on SATURDAY, APRIL 29 AT 2:00 PM at the FREEPORT COMMUNITY CENTER

MEMBERS AND FRIENDS of FHS are invited to attend our business meeting followed by a presentation from **Tara Kelly, Executive Director of**



Maine Preservation, left, on the ongoing work of historic preservation in Maine.

Help us celebrate a successful year, find out what's ahead for 2023, and learn about the current state of preservation in our region.



ANNUAL PLANT SALE



**Saturday May 20, from
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
in the Harrington
House Garden**

This fundraiser is a great way to get new plants to freshen up your garden for the spring while supporting the work our volunteer gardeners to throughout the growing season. The courtyard at Harrington House is a place many visitors and locals enjoy as a quiet green space in the heart of downtown Freeport. Stop by to pick up something to make your garden a little greener.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Curious Minds: Story Share

Thursday, March 30, 1:00-3:00 PM

at Harrington House

Free, registration available now!

Share and learn together. Bring an item or a story related to Freeport to share or come to listen and see unique pieces of history.

THIS EVENT IS FREE BUT SPACE IS LIMITED, SO REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.

Continuing the Legacy of Polar Science with Dr. Susana Hancock

Tuesday April 4, 6:30 PM at Meetinghouse Arts

\$10, \$5 for members, tickets available online now.

Learn about the past and present of polar science and how it's informed the understanding of our climate systems.

SPACE IS LIMITED, GET TICKETS NOW!

2023 Annual Meeting

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday April 29, 2:00 PM

at Freeport Community Center

Free, registration available now!

Attend our annual business meeting followed by a presentation from Tara Kelly, Executive Director of Maine Preservation, on the ongoing work of historic preservation in Maine.

Volunteer Info Session

Tuesday May 2, 2:30 PM at Harrington House

Sign up coming soon.

Learn about volunteer opportunities with FHS and meet our staff and volunteers to find your place at FHS.

Plant Sale

Saturday, May 20, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM

in the Harrington House Garden

Find beautiful new annual and perennial plants to refresh your spring garden at our annual plant sale fundraiser to support our green oasis on Main Street.

The Story of Winslow Park with Dr. George Connick

Wednesday, May 24, 6:30 PM

at the Freeport Community Library

For generations, Winslow Park has been one of Freeport's favorite recreation sites, but how did this peninsula on Casco Bay become a beloved public space? Learn the history of the park and the people behind this gift to the people of Freeport.

Gala in the Garden

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, June 17 in the Harrington House Garden

Join us in the Harrington House Garden and Freeport Oyster Bar for fine food, drink, and entertainment while supporting FHS.

Kid's Activities

1st Saturdays, June-September

Join us for a kid-friendly activities on the porch first Saturdays every month from June-September, starting at 10 AM.

This event coincides with Visit Freeport's Makers on Main events, making for a creative day for the whole family.

Harrington House from 1:00-3:00 PM

Free, registration online.

Curious Minds: Discover

Thursday, June 29

Curious about your home, or maybe a family member, but don't know where to start? Learn what useful Freeport resources are available at FHS, online, or in our community.

Curious Minds: Story Share

Thursday, September 7

Share and learn together. Bring an item or a story related to Freeport to share or come to listen and see unique pieces of history.

Curious Minds: Discover

Thursday, November 9

Curious about your home, or maybe a family member, but don't know where to start? Learn what useful Freeport resources are available at FHS, online, or in our community.

**SIGN UP
ONLINE!**

Find these events on our website for more details and information about registration and ticket sales. We also take at-the-door admission for ticketed events as space allows. Email info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org if you have questions about attending a program or event.

SCIENCE MEETS HISTORY IN THE ARCTIC WITH SUSANA HANCOCK

Dr. Susana Hancock was first inspired to be a polar scientist growing up on Casco Bay. In the summer, she'd visit Admiral Peary's summer house on Eagle Island and hear stories about fellow Freeporter, Donald MacMillan. This past year, she joined five men to recreate an ill-fated North Pole expedition from 150 years ago, nearly 40 years before Peary and MacMillan's 1909 famous expedition. Ahead of her FHS April 4th presentation, Continuing Maine's Legacy of Polar Science, Dr. Hancock agreed to a brief interview for readers of *The Dash*.



Q: What aspects of early arctic expeditions first captured your interest?

For as long as I remember, I have loved winter and the idea of remoteness, so it didn't take long for me to discover polar expeditions where these go hand-in-hand! I went on my first Arctic research expedition when I was 20 and being in tents all alone on the ice unlocked a new level of happiness for me. Each time I've been in the polar regions, I just feel

comfortable and "home," so my early intuition was strong.

While in school, I had a few invitations to sail on the schooner *Bowdoin*, which was commissioned specifically for Arctic sailing by Macmillan. Through this, I became really intrigued by the power of the ice, both for the challenges of naval engineering and also scientifically.

In 7th grade, Freeport Schools took me to visit Bowdoin College, and I got to go into their Arctic museum in the morning. I probably shouldn't say this, but I definitely skipped other bits of the tour to stay at the museum for most of the day. Between reading diaries and seeing the wooden skis, I was the proverbial kid in a candy shop there.

Q: How has polar science changed since the time of the Nordenskiöld expedition, whose steps you retraced?

There are several differences. One of the biggest is that expeditions in the 1870s still were driven by exploration rather than scientific understanding.

Certainly, some explorers studied planetary phenomena, but it wasn't until

1882 that the international community zeroed in on having scientific foci in polar expeditions. Whilst some of the science was strong, a lot was really bad (eugenics, capturing people and animals). Interestingly, the effects of this 1882 decision led to a variety of scientific advancements outside of the poles from academic peer-review processes to Sputnik and even today's mapping software!

Interestingly enough, even though the explorers I retraced were earlier and largely in the international steeplechase to the North Pole, they actually took some scientific observations, which are incredible data today. These observations weren't done in the name of science, but rather to confirm they would make it to the Pole first.

Q: What sights or experiences do you feel you had in common with the members of the Nordenskiöld Expedition? What was different?

One common trait is that we both thought we knew where we were going, and both had to continually reroute because

"For as long as I remember, I have loved winter and the idea of remoteness, so it didn't take long for me to discover polar expeditions where these go hand-in-hand!"



PHOTO CREDIT: JONAS PAUREL

of the environment! Very bluntly, the Nordenskiöld expedition failed to reach the North Pole because there was too much sea ice. We failed because there was not enough. My expedition had more advanced technology (e.g., GPS) but many of the dangers remained the same: polar bears, cyclones, frostbite, crevasses, isolation.

Q: How has living in Maine, or Freeport more specifically, affected your outlook on climate science?

I've just been so lucky to grow up surrounded by nature and encouraged to explore it. I fell in love with science after stargazing with my uncle, Bob Olney

(also of Freeport), at age 4. At age 6, I was given a little underwater microscope that I would take into the ravine behind my house after school. All the while, I had great teachers that really latched onto my environmental passions (although at one point, Mr. Lunt at Mast Landing School called my parents to say I needed to expand my interests—clearly that worked well!).

Having left town as a teenager, I moved back at the start of COVID to work remotely. Nearly all of my work is on the international level, and I get out of these intense high-level meetings and can go for a run in the woods to recharge. Seeing

both all the beauty here but also all the rapid change is a daily reminder why I am fighting for the planet. I am also grateful for being in such an engaged community.

Q: Has working in the arctic changed how you experience life in Maine?

I've come to appreciate the unique ecosystem of Maine, especially living by the Gulf of Maine. So many of the changes we're seeing here are directly the result of a warming Arctic. Maine also has cultural connections with the northern polar regions that go back more than 10,000 years, so it's kind of neat to be part of that lineage! FHS



Susana speaking at the 2022 UN Climate Change Conference in Egypt.

SUSANA'S PRESENTATION WILL BE HELD TUESDAY, APRIL 4TH @ 6:30 PM AT MEETINGHOUSE ARTS and will cover the development of polar exploration, how early expeditions contributed to her research in 2022, and how the polar regions shape our knowledge of the global climate systems. **You can get tickets in the events section of our website: www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org**

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

We continue to receive and consider some wonderful items into the Freeport Historical Society's collections.

SOMETIMES WE WONDER if there is something “in the air” when multiple items related to the same topic, family, or person come in from different donors all at the same time. It is even more remarkable when these donations are from donors across the country!

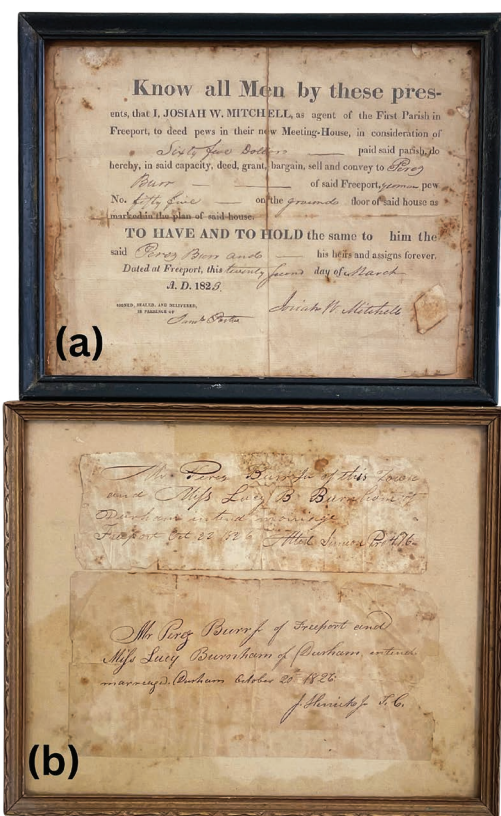
For instance, recently we received two separate donations of items representing multiple generations of the Burr family. **The first donation from a donor in South Carolina** includes framed documents of (a) an 1823 pew deed to First Parish in “their new Meeting-House” for Perez Burr (probably Sr.) and (b) Perez Burr, Jr. and Lucy Burnham’s 1826 marriage intention publishments.

The second donation is from Freeport resident Joyce Veilleux, with items related to John Burr (son of Perez Burr, Jr.). It includes correspondence, letters, and his 1873 pocket diary as well as a cash account book from 1949-1950 to Burr’s Greenhouse.

In 1800, Perez Burr, Sr. started a shoemaking business on Route 136. He passed the company to his son, Perez Burr, Jr. An expert shoemaker, Burr taught the Davis brothers who would go on to start their own Freeport shoe dynasty and feature in our other donation below. In 1871, the Burr family built greenhouses and operated a floral business until the mid 1940s. These donations reunite elements of this family’s story back under one roof.

We also recently were thrilled to receive the 1859 diary and personal account book of Leander Joseph Wood courtesy of Elinor Small Hudson. Wood was born in Standish, ME on May 25, 1829, and moved to Pownal as a child. He was the father of Martha Tappan Wood, who married Benjamin E. Davis, one of the five Davis brothers who owned and operated the H.E. Davis Shoe Company in Freeport. Leander moved to Freeport in 1895 and lived there the rest of his life. His brief, daily jottings offer rich insights and universal sentiments focused on health, family, and home. Like Leander, we, too, are looking forward to “green peas and other good things” as the weather turns warmer and our gardens sprout.

The diary was given by Thomas Grenville Hudson II and Meredith Hudson Koener, third great-grandchildren of Leander Wood. From the Estate of Martha Kennedy.



FHS Volunteers Compile 2nd Volume of Historic Ads

BOB FUSSELMAN AND MARGARET WEBB have been searching the FHS collections for advertisements featuring Freeport businesses since



2020. What they found covers the years 1892-1969 and showcases the variety of businesses concentrated in Freeport over seven decades. While including ads featured in the Freeport High School Yearbook the Clarion (now the Falcon) like the first volume, this new booklet branches into new sources with ads found in newspapers, community cookbooks, and postcards.

Bob and Margaret’s goal in this project was to compile and share visual advertisements for Freeport businesses before the retail outlet boom of later decades. The book records a picture of a Freeport based around small downtown businesses that were an important part of daily life.



INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

Volunteer Info Session Tuesday, May 2, 2:30 PM at Harrington House

Dip your toe into the waters of volunteering at FHS. Learn about volunteer opportunities, meet staff and volunteers, and get answers to your questions with this casual introduction as we get ready for spring and summer activities. Visit our website or call to sign up!



Programs for Curious Minds!

OUR COLLECTION isn’t the only place you can access Freeport’s rich history. Join us throughout the year as we host four programs that will empower you to share, explore, and deepen your understanding of the many stories Freeport has to tell.

Do you have a Freeport story, photograph, or object you love—or perhaps have always wanted—to share or want to listen and learn with others in your community? Come to our next Collection Program! Are you interested in what resources may be available to learn more about your home or Freeport ancestor? Join us at a Research Program.

Curious Minds: Story Share
March 30th and September 7th

Join us at the Harrington House from 1:00 -3:00 PM to share and learn together. Bring an item or a story related to Freeport to share or come to listen and see unique pieces of history. Space is limited, so registration is required. **You can sign up for the March 30th session now!**

Curious Minds: Discover
June 29th and November 9th

Curious about your home, or maybe a family member, but don’t know where to start? Learn what useful Freeport resources are available at the FHS, online, or in our community to help you start or restart your research journey. Once you have the tools there are endless discoveries to be made.

Annual Fund Donors 2022

Your donations support our public lectures, workshops, and exhibits; our collections care and acquisitions; and our professional staff who advance our mission to keep Freeport's past present.

Thank You

Up to \$10,000

Linda L. Bean
Mary-Eliza Wengren
Sally Walsh

Up to \$5,000

Elinor Hudson
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Up to \$1,000

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Thomas & Willo Wright
Bridget & Michael Healy
Roger Carpenter
& Alice Rohman

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Please visit us online to join in supporting our 2023 programs and operations.

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Membership Renewals

With our Annual Meeting fast approaching it's time to make sure your membership is up to date. We will be reaching out to lapsed members by email and mail during March and early April, but if you want to get a head start you can renew your membership now by visiting www.freeporthistoricalsociety.org/membership. Want to skip the hassle of remembering when to renew? You can now choose the subscription option to renew automatically. Have questions about membership? We'd love to talk, reach out to us by email, phone, or in person during open hours. As always, thank you to our members for being a part of what we do.



BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

All Members

- Printed edition of our newsletter *The Dash*
- Discounted admission on programs and events
- Vouchers for downtown walking tours
- 10% Discount at Freeport Oyster Bar and other community partners
- Benefits start at \$20 for seniors and \$35 for individual memberships.

Family Members at \$50 or Contributing Members at \$100

All the above for 2 members in the same family, plus:

- Free Admission to Pettengill Farm Day for the whole family

Supporting Membership at \$250

All the above, plus:

- Voucher for 1 dozen oysters at Freeport Oyster Bar

Sustaining Membership at \$500

All the above, plus:

- Private guided tour of Pettengill Farmhouse
- Flight Club membership at Freeport Oyster Bar – includes 1/2 off your first 1/2 dozen oysters each visit.

Leadership Membership at \$1,000

All the above, plus:

- Private guided boat tour of the Harraseeket Historic District