

The Dash

Published by  **FREEPORT Historical Society** | *Connecting past and present since 1969.*



Spring 2025 Events

SEE PAGE 06



The Lost Casco Castle

SEE PAGE 09

SPRING 2025

NEW ACQUISITIONS!

*FHS expands its
Dillingham-Dennison
Collection*

SEE PAGE 04

Elinor Small Hudson

*One of Freeport's 'Living Treasures' shares memories of life in Freeport
and gratitude for her family's beloved cottage on Wolfe's Neck Point*

BY MARYELLEN CAREW

Tracing steps, little to big

Elinor Small Hudson was born in 1933. "Up until the time I was two, we lived on the second floor of a building that's now part of Harraseeket Inn," Elinor notes. Her family then moved to East Street into one of three houses her grandfather owned in town.

She speaks fondly of her childhood neighborhood and of fun playing outdoors in the yard, in the nearby woods, in their sand pile, and especially in a little playhouse that her grandfather made. "We played a lot in the neighborhood, but I was a homebody, so I didn't want to be wandering around town. My family had wood delivered for the fireplace and the furnace. Neighborhood friends and I would stack that wood to build 'houses' and, literally, we'd make 'rooms.'"

When first grade beckoned, Elinor headed off to Grove Street School, in the building that's now Freeport's Town Hall. There were no school buses then for children who lived in town; students walked everywhere, including home for



Elinor and Gren Hudson
PHOTO COURTESY OF
ELINOR SMALL HUDSON

lunch and back and home again around 3 o'clock. "Each grade had a room, and that was it," she says. "We were a very close group. We played out back in the grove and on the ledges there." Elinor's parents figured an ingenious enhancement

for wintertime play: "My father owned a shoe factory, so he cut leather pieces and asked one of his stitchers to sew them to the seat of my snow pants. Then I could slide on my seat right down those ledges. It was wonderful!"

Grove Street took Elinor through fifth grade, but for sixth she moved to the old high school building on Howard Place. "The middle grades were downstairs, and the high school was upstairs," she recalls. Classes were structured, and studies focused on the basics: reading, writing, math and science. She enjoyed her school years and all the subjects. "I liked everything. I did

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

The Dash

SPRING 2025

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
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

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mary Babikian, *President*
Nadia Saliba, *Vice President*
Polly Brann, *Secretary*
Joseph Gervais, *Treasurer*
Scott Burrill
Jim DeGrandpre
Elizabeth Guffey
Nora Healy
Jessica Martin
Jed Standen
Sally Walsh
Heather Zachau

STAFF

Eric C. Smith
Executive Director
director@freeporthistoricalsociety.org

Audrey Wolfe
Collections & Education Manager
library@freeporthistoricalsociety.org

Timothy McGarvey
Community Engagement Coordinator
info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org

THE DASH

Elizabeth Guffey, *Editor*
dash@freeporthistoricalsociety.org

PELLE Graphic Design

Letter from the Executive Director

A FEW WEEKS AGO Freeport adjusted the boundaries of our four voting districts: a rebalancing done every few years to keep an equal number of voters in each district. Of course, as soon as the new districts are set, the numbers change as voter registration changes. This reminds me of nearly everything we all try to keep in balance – it doesn't stay balanced for long. In fact, what I learned from Maine vaudeville entertainer Randy Judkins some 40 years ago when he was an artist-in-residence at Morse Street School, is that the act of balancing is continuous adjustment.

This is also what I have learned about community history in my time at Freeport Historical Society. How we understand history is always in the context of the present moment. As the moment shifts, so does what seems important about the past. Things that once seemed consequential can fade with time, only to reemerge with new significance. People and events once overlooked can resurface and reshape our understanding of a place and time. Our role as a collecting institution is to document as best we can the Freeport of yesterday and today to be uncovered and understood in an unknowable future moment. Our role as historians is to use the materials we have collected to continually reexamine, reinterpret, and rebalance our conception of the past.

As an organization we are also always balancing our attention and efforts between our collections, brick and mortar maintenance of our properties, community engagement, organizational partnerships, and public programming. Some of this balance is seasonal, and after a winter of planning we are beginning to roll out another season of programs, partnerships, and events. Some balancing has longer cycles, like our focus this year on Pettengill Farm.

Fifty years ago, FHS was entrusted with the responsibility of stewarding what was then a 165-year-old saltbox farmhouse. As our first and only property at the time, this collection was simply known as Old House. This Old House is now 215 years old and continues to hold mysteries yet to be uncovered and understood. We have taken a minimal preservation approach to the house and grounds, doing our best to stay the course of time and deterioration, intervening when necessary, while keeping the layers of history inside the house open to many levels of interpretation. But despite the illusion of Pettengill as a timeless feature on our landscape, time is always marching on. Plaster cracks and falls, fields grow fallow, and forests reclaim fields. The time has come to rebalance our approach to Pettengill Farm, to preserve the house and the historic landscape entrusted to us half a century ago.

You will see changes this spring and summer at the farm. Livestock will return to graze in the fields, both utilizing and fertilizing this agricultural resource. Interior stabilization efforts will ensure we can continue to invite students and visitors into the house safely. Together we'll be exploring how to increase access to the farm and house for people of all ages and abilities as we restore the historic agricultural landscape and treasure cultural site that is Pettengill.

While gradual changes over time may be imperceptible, rebalancing can seem abrupt. We know Pettengill Farm is loved exactly how it is, and we will do our best make these updates responsibly for the benefit of the whole community.

I look forward to celebrating this anniversary with you all year long, through upcoming exhibits and programs that will look back at the entire history of the farm, including 50 years of FHS stewardship and programming. I also look forward to seeing you at Pettengill as we continue to write and reexamine its story together.

– Eric

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTORS, CONTRIBUTIONS & IDEAS

What do you want to read in the pages of *The DASH*? Do you have a story idea? Do you want to contribute an article on an aspect of Freeport history that interests you? Or interview one of Freeport's many "Living Treasures" and write about them? We want to hear from you! Send your story ideas or interest in writing to Dash@freeporthistoricalsociety.org.



Congratulations to Freeport's Citizens of the Year

Freeport Historical Society congratulates **Kathy & Sam Smith**, Freeport's Citizens of the Year for 2024. At a presentation by the Town Council on March 4, Kathy and Sam were recognized for their service to the community. The Historical Society is especially grateful to Kathy, whose contributions to our work have been invaluable.



Message to our Members

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the Smith family's generous gift of Pettengill Farm to Freeport Historical Society.

In recognition of that, we are looking to revitalize this historic property with a focus on conservation, history, and farming. Our goals are to expand recreational opportunities, stabilize and showcase the historic farmhouse, and return some of the pastures to haying and grazing animals.

We will be working with local organizations to preserve the pristine landscape, make the property more accessible to the community, and highlight its interesting history. Together with Freeport Conservation Trust, we plan to improve and expand the trail system, update signage, and install a compost toilet. L.L. Bean Outdoor Discovery Programs will be hosting birding outings, taking advantage of Pettengill Farm's special environment on the Harraseeket estuary. We are consulting with Maine Preservation to thoughtfully restore the historic farmhouse and make it more accessible for tours and education opportunities. And a graduating apprentice from Wolfes Neck Center will be



grazing cows and sheep on the pastures this summer, a nod to the historic function of this saltwater farm.

We hope you will be as excited as we are about the revitalization effort, which will have a community-wide impact. We welcome your input and thank you for your ongoing support.

– Mary Babikian, *President, Board of Trustees*

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

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

Freeport Historical Society Expands Dillingham-Dennison Collection with New Acquisition

THIS WINTER, Freeport Historical Society purchased a significant collection of Dillingham-Dennison family material for our archives. The acquisition includes approximately 150 letters and documents, a ledger, and bound genealogical records spanning from the 1790s through 1863. Remarkably, the material is the predecessor to two other substantial holdings of Dillingham-Dennison family material in our collection (Collection 135 and Collection 153).

This new material focuses on the Freeport families of Dillingham, Dennison, Bacon, and Soule, who were all connected by marriage. Notable items from the purchase include War of 1812 correspondence, Samuel Dillingham's (1751-1832) blacksmith ledger, ship-related records from Havana and New Orleans, and business transactions linked to the sloop *Susan Soule*. These documents offer invaluable insight into the daily struggles, long separations, community affairs, and deep personal connections within a coastal New England family. Business letters detail land purchases, ship ownership, and the ins-and-outs of Freeport's maritime trade.

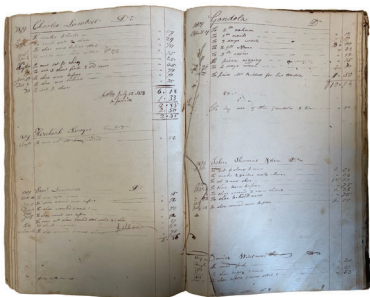
Combined with our other Dillingham-Dennison holdings, these acquisitions are an essential resource for understanding the intersection of maritime history and family life. They also shed light on how Freeport's residents navigated the economic and social landscape from the 18th to the early 20th centuries. FHS

Thanks to the generosity of our donors

This acquisition was made possible through the Freeport Historical Society's Collection Acquisition Fund, which was created to ensure that valuable materials like these are preserved and accessible for research. Your continued support helps us continue to acquire important local history for future generations.



David Coffin, FHS Collection Committee co-chair, reviews the new Dillingham-Dennison collection.



Samuel Dillingham's entries include each client's name, the date and nature of the work performed, and the cost. Shoeing oxen and horses seemed to be one of Samuel's main sources of income, along with typical iron work such as making chains and nails.

Last fall, we invited students from Freeport High School's Creative Writing Club to contribute articles to *The DASH*. They visited Harrington House to get inspiration from the exhibits and meet with Audrey, *DASH* editor Elizabeth Guffey, and Education Committee chair Polly Brann to brainstorm topics. Then they went off to research and write, under the guidance of advisor and FHS English teacher Margaret Chalmers. This piece about Casco Castle is a taste of things to come.

Look for more from the students in upcoming issues of *The DASH*.

The Lost Glory of Casco Castle



BY JARED MCKENNEY

IT WAS THE TURN of the 20th century, and trolleys were the biggest revolution in modern transportation. One well-known railroad owner in Maine, Amos F. Gerald, the "Electric Railway King," wasn't making back the money from his railways.

So, he drew up plans for a resort in Freeport, Maine. He intended to sway the wealthy and elite to come to spend their spoils. He dubbed it the Casco Castle due to its castle-like visage that is best shown with a towering pillar.

The resort had recreational bells and whistles that even included a zoo, but its novelty failed to pique the interest of the wealthy. The rise of the personal automobile was seen as the American dream, leading to a decrease in trolley popularity and profits. The hotel soon closed, and all attempts to revive the former glory failed to get off the ground. The landmark's saga ended in 1914, when a fire ravaged the structure, leaving behind the single stone tower that now resides on private property. It has become something of an urban legend that can seldom be visited or seen past the trees, yet it still boldly stands today. FHS



The electric street railway, the trolley, came to Freeport in 1902 and ran from Brunswick to Yarmouth via Freeport Village and South Freeport until 1929. The installation of the trolley enabled Freeport residents and visitors to quickly get places the railroad didn't go, but the route was also planned to bring passengers to Casco Castle. Visitors arriving by trolley walked across a suspension bridge over an inlet of the Harraseeket River serving as the "moat" for the castle.

Spring 2025 Events



2025 Annual Meeting

Sunday, April 27th, 3 pm
Meetinghouse Arts, 40 Main Street



REGISTER HERE

We are pleased to host our annual meeting at Meetinghouse Arts, located in the historic First Parish Church at 40 Main Street. This community gathering is open to all and free to attend, but we kindly request that you register in advance through our website. Our program will be a celebration of 50 years of FHS stewardship at Pettengill Farm, and we invite you to come ready to share your personal stories and reflections about our historic salt-water farm.

WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES OF THE PETTENGILLS OR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES ON THE FARM OVER THE LAST HALF CENTURY?

Plant Sale

Saturday, May 17th, 9am to 1pm
Harrington House Gardens, 45 Main Street

We invite garden enthusiasts, plant lovers, and community members to explore the beautiful Harrington House Gardens—carefully cultivated by our dedicated team of volunteer gardeners—while browsing an extensive selection of plants perfect for enhancing your own outdoor spaces.

Come connect with nature, support FHS, and discover the joy of gardening at the Harrington House Gardens.



Summer Solstice Gala

Saturday, June 21st, 6 pm
Mallet Barn, 713 Wolfe's Neck Road

Get ready for an enchanting evening at the Mallet Barn as Freeport Historical Society hosts its annual Summer Solstice Gala! This popular event promises an unforgettable night of live music and great food.

As usual, there will be a **SPECTACULAR AUCTION FEATURING PRIZES DONATED BY LOCAL FREEPORT BUSINESSES**. Don't miss your chance to bid on unique treasures while supporting a great cause!

Stay tuned to the Freeport Historical Society website for ticket details and purchase information. Mark your calendars and prepare for a magical summer celebration!

Visit Our Gift Shop

Our distinctive gift shop offers a curated selection of books, hats, and exquisite handmade wooden crafts. Many treasures in our collection are created by local master craftsman David Coffin, who holds the distinction of being the last living signatory of the FHS incorporation documents from 1969.



Visit us today or check out our online gift shop on our website to find something truly special!



Elinor Small Hudson

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
well, so it was a fun time."

There were aspects of school that stood out for her beyond classroom time. Public Speaking competitions in the assembly room were special occasions, and Elinor enjoyed participating. "All my relatives would come. I won one of them, at least." A few years later, Freeport High's band marched in the town's parades and was regarded in the area as "an excellent band." The town built a new gymnasium in 1947, when Elinor was a freshman, and Freeport High continued building its reputation for fine basketball teams.

A lot of her days focused on school life, but after school and during the summer the local Girl Scout troop "was a big thing," for Elinor, along with dance and piano lessons. She especially loved dance, including the recitals. Were there different styles of dance? "There were," she smiles, "but I was a tap dancer!"

Elinor's dance lessons began in

Freeport, over what later became George Denney's Cole Haan store on Main Street. Later she took both dance and piano, and her father drove her to Brunswick for these. Her dance lessons were fairly near Bowdoin College. "My piano lessons were across the bridge and up the hill in Topsham. Once in a while I'd walk from dance lessons to my piano lessons. I don't know why my mother let me do this!"

"When I was a high school senior—that was 1950-51—our family moved to Chapel Street, into the house next door!" she laughs. Chapel Street abuts East Street, and her old and new homes were adjacent. Elinor's next move after graduation was farther afield—to Colby College in Waterville, where she majored in mathematics, graduating in '55. While at Colby, she received a number of academic awards and served as president of the Women's Athletic Association during her Senior year. After graduation, she moved to Boston where there were 8 or 10 other Colby women starting their careers.



Elinor (age 3 in this photo) speaks fondly of her childhood in Freeport.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ELINOR SMALL HUDSON

ed to make money so that we could send them to college." Elinor applied for and was offered a job in the telephone area at L.L.Bean. She reported for work in February, and after a few days of training was ready to start her job. "That very day they came to me because they knew that I had majored in math. They needed analytical help in the marketing area. So, I left telephones, and I never went back. I was in the right place at the right time!"

Elinor spent 22 years happily occupied in L.L.Bean's Marketing department, working on company planning, budgeting, and managing the customer file. "I just loved it. It was very stimulating. I did a lot of traveling and had a lot of contact with very bright people, internally and externally, particularly as I worked with the executive group at L.L.Bean. It was rewarding also to develop and manage my staff—also talented people. I really kind of hated to retire because I loved my work! It was just a perfect job."

The cottage on Wolfe's Neck Point

Through it all, a happy constant in Elinor's life has been her family's cottage on the water at the tip of Wolfe's Neck. "It's been in my family since 1915, purchased by my Great-grandfather Davis and three of his



The Wolfe's Neck cottage was purchased by Elinor's Great-grandfather Davis and remains in the family to this day.

brothers. It was the first cottage on the Point. There were other cottages that were built in the early 1900's, but this was built in 1888. We have friends who have been on the Point for years, where there's been long-lasting family ownership."

The cottage was given to Elinor's father in 1944, just before L.M.C. and Eleanor Smith came to Freeport from Philadelphia as summer residents. The Smiths purchased the Stone House and much of the peninsula. Elinor notes, "The Smiths were ardent preservationists and very generous people, and their impact upon this area and the State of Maine has been tremendous." In 2011, the Smith family decided the families living on the road from the Mallett Barn to the Point should own the road and the stone pier. Elinor was a key member of the team that worked to establish the Wolfe Neck Road Association, and she has been involved with it ever since.

"This cottage has made Freeport a very special place for me and for our children and our grandchildren, who've had so many wonderful summers here."

A small Maine town that was "an entity unto itself"

The Dash asked if Elinor observed Freeport was changing over the years

she was growing up.

"I think the town was not changing very much when I was in grade school and high school. The town was totally different because the town was 'an entity unto itself.' In other words, people bought their groceries in town; everything centered around the town." Years ago, she and her late husband Gren counted the number of Freeport's grocery stores, the numbers of gas stations, the number of drugstores that they could remember from their younger days. "There were, believe it or not, 10 or 12 gas stations in the town. There were at least five grocery stores. There were two drug stores. It was very self-sufficient. We might have gone to Portland once every six weeks or so. A trip to Boston was truly unusual. We just lived in the town."

The big changes began to happen as the shoe factories began to leave and as L.L.Bean began to expand. Freeport had been a shoe factory town, and it became a tourist town. FHS

Guest contributor Maryellen Carew knew Elinor Hudson when they both worked at L.L.Bean. While there, Maryellen wrote for the internal newsletter, including writing employee profiles.

Want to know more?

See Elinor Small Hudson's story in *The Dash*, Spring 2021:

"The Davis Family and the Point of the Wolfe's Neck Peninsula."

The Dash

Published by Freeport Historical Society | Keeping the past present, one story at a time.



Scan to access Spring 2021 edition online

Elinor also researched and wrote "Remembering a Neighborhood: Nathan Nye and Morse Streets," on file at Freeport Historical Society. Elinor and Kathryn Schneider Smith co-authored a history of the cottages at the end of Wolfe's Neck, also on file at FHS.



Elinor graduated from Colby College in 1955.
PHOTO COURTESY OF ELINOR SMALL HUDSON

Annual Fund Donors 2024

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

Carol Wishcamper
Mary-Eliza Wengren

UP TO \$5,000

Janice and Edward Gerry
Mary Minor Smith
Sarah Walsh

UP TO \$2,500

James and Anne Cram
Mabel Gerquest
Maureen Gorman
Deborah Weare Slavin and John Slavin
Cynthia and Edward Jellison
Bradley Snow

UP TO \$1,000

Mary and George Babikian
Beverly and Mark Curry
James DeGrandpre
Rebecca and David Hotelling
Elinor Hudson
Dennis and Story Landis

UP TO \$500

Judith and Stephen Brown
Barbara and David Caldwell
Maryellen Carew
Jay and Lynne Espy
Genie and Joseph Field
Susan and Dusty Miller
Robert Moore
Pat and Fred Palmer
Janet and Thomas Ross
Ineke Schair
Bonnie and Matthew Siegel
Kathy and Sam Smith
Tom and Jule Whelan

UP TO \$250

Sandy and Mary Allen
Joan Benoit-Samuelson and Scott Samuelson
Lynne A. Brown
Roger Carpenter and Alice Rohman
David and Connie Coffin
Malcolm and Susan Collins
Colin and North Cunningham
Jane Danielson
David Emery
Jay and Julie Flower
Eugenie Francine and Brian Noyes
Thomas and Margaret Goodyear
Lisa Gorman
Jane and Alden Grant
Elizabeth Guffey
Lynn and Bill Heinz
Stephen and Cinda Joyce
Mary LeMaistre
John and Vicki Lowe
Jessica and Seth Martin
Philip Means
Jennifer Melville
Elisabeth and John Montgomery
Janet Morehouse
Beth and Bill Muldoon
Anne and Ben Niles
Norma, Julie and Laura Phelps
Rodney Regier
Roger and Beverly Richmond
Betsy Roper
Nancy Salmon and David Webster
Lynn and James Shaffer
Thomas and Willo Wright

UP TO \$100

Margaret and John Albright
Guy Blanchard and Michael Kipp
Polly and Steve Brann
Carrine Burns and Pete Bouman
James Chute and Sarah Hayes
Joan Connick
Maureen and Laurence Cullen
Kathleen Darnon
Frederick Dale and Carol Hudson
Marilyn and Atwood Dunham
Judith Elfing
Julie and Daniel Freund
Ralph and Katherine Harding
Nora Healy
Mary and David Hurd
Tony and Hillary Jessen
Sandra and Dennis King
Nelson Larkins and Karin Van Nostrand
Anne LeClair
Dorothy and Edward McAloney
Betsy McElvein and Benjamin Soule
Lincoln and Kim Merrill
Geoffrey and Joan Naab
Amos and Lola Orcutt
Deborah and Christopher Pinkham
Cathy and Fred Robie
Gustav Schwenk III
Sherron and Bob Small
Jayne and Chris Soles
Charles and Barbara Soule
Caroline Southall
Tee Taggart and Jack Turner
Mary Tagney
Donna and Herbert Taylor
Betsy and Nathaniel Warren-White
Helen Richmond Webb
Jane and Frederick Woodruff

Our Annual Sponsors

GOLD SPONSORS



SILVER SPONSORS



LEADERSHIP SPONSORS



SUPPORTING SPONSORS



*Interested in seeing
your business here?*

Contact us for details about Annual and Event Sponsorships
at info@freeporthistoricalsociety.org



HARRINGTON HOUSE, 45 Main Street,
Freeport, ME 04032

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #47
Freeport, Maine

Join us
today!

Member support provides a foundation for our organization to carry out the work of engaging our community to experience connections between past and present.

Join today and get exclusive member benefits.

2025 MEMBER BENEFITS	LEADERSHIP \$1,000	SUSTAINING \$500	SUPPORTING \$250	FAMILY \$100	SENIOR FAMILY \$50	INDIVIDUAL \$50	SENIOR/ STUDENT \$25
Printed edition of our newsletter <i>The Dash</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discounted admission on programs and events	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vouchers for downtown walking tours	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10% Discount at Freeport Oyster Bar and other community partners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Voucher for 1 dozen oysters at Freeport Oyster Bar	✓	✓	✓				
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	✓	✓					
Private guided boat tour of the Harraseeket Historic District	✓						



For more information:
freeporthistoricalsociety.org
or 207-865-3170