
LCHA CHRONICLE

Lincoln County Historical Association

Letter from Ed

The end of another year is fast approaching. We have accomplished much, and I thank our Board of Trustees and our many docents and volunteers for their tireless efforts.

Over the past three years as president, I have been guided by you, the LCHA members, who express your enthusiasm for Lincoln County history by attending lectures and events. I appreciate your willingness to invest membership fees and annual pledges have helped us maintain our historic buildings and keep them open for the public.

Our last event for the year is coming up soon. Please mark your calendars for LCHA's 2015 Annual Meeting, which will be held on November 14 at 5:00 PM.

I extend my best wishes for a peaceful and healthy 2016 and look forward to being a part of new ideas and adventures that will be happening in LCHA.

Ed



Partying at Pownalborough

LCHA members and their guests enjoyed a perfect summer evening on the grounds of the Pownalborough Court House in Dresden on August 22. The newly refreshed grape arbor, lush with fruit, and the 18th century period garden were particular areas of interest. Inside the building, guests mingled in the historic tavern and viewed the old courtroom and private family rooms.

Built in 1761, Pownalborough Court House still stands on its original site on the banks of the Kennebec River. It is a remarkable example of colonial New England architecture that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Court House served as a tavern, a place for church services, a dancing school, and as the Dresden Post Office from 1807-1855. In addition to its vital role in the legal history of Lincoln County and Maine, the Court House was also a family home to Captain Samuel Goodwin and his descendants, who lived there until 1954.



On the road with LCHA Deerfield excursion

This year's two-day "On the Road" excursion in mid-September brought a dozen curious travelers to Historic Deerfield, Mass., with a stop along the way at the Federal style Barrett House in New Ipswich, NH.

George Keyes conceived an itinerary that included a lecture on Colonial architecture and a behind-the-scenes tour of Deerfield's Flynt Center. In a large work area of the contemporary structure discretely situated off the main street, Executive Director, Philip Zea described the process of obtaining the objects that help to bring the 18th century village back to life.



Linda Pope views objects in Flynt Center archives
LCHA Chronicle

For the rest of the second day, the visitors wandered throughout the properties, enjoyed afternoon tea at the Deerfield Inn, and then gathered at a local restaurant for dinner.

Stewards of LCHA buildings are finding that "On the Road" excursions give them helpful insights about building restoration and historic interpretation.

Swan Island day trip

You must put Swan Island on your to-do list. The four-mile long property, maintained by the Maine Wildlife Division with additional support from the Friends of Swan Island, is located in the Kennebec River at the head of Merrymeeting Bay across a narrow channel from Richmond.

Early on September 24, a group of LCHA members met local place-based historian Jay Robbins at the Richmond boat landing. A brand new barge with comfortable padded benches was the first surprise, followed by the beauty of the landscape that unfolded as a park ranger ferried us around the northern tip of the island and moored on the Dresden side.

The now-uninhabited island is known for its abundant wildlife, especially nesting bald eagles, white-tailed deer and wild turkey. But it was used by Native American tribes as well as early explorers and settlers and was once an 18th and 19th century town called Perkins Township.

Jay opened one remaining building for our group. Its rooms and meager furnishings remain exactly as they were left by the last inhabitants. Much work needs to be done to restore the home, but the interior offers many hints about life



Abandoned home

in the late 19th century.

Visitors may tour Swan Island by Wildlife Division truck or bicycle (provided at no charge) or by foot. A well-maintained campground is situated near the Dresden boat mooring. Canoes and kayaks are available for rent. There's even a wildlife viewing tower and a stocked fishing pond just for kids. Swan Island is open May 1 through the end of October. Fee, including ferry ride is \$8 for adults; Children 5 and under free.

2015 Annual Meeting

Please join us
Saturday, November 14
 5:00 PM

Tom & Wendy Eichler's
 21 Willow Lane, Wiscasset

Bring an appetizer or
 dessert to share

Drinks provided

Meet new Trustees
 Elect Officers

You can help keep history alive:

The experiences we have in our youth go a long way in determining our careers and leisure time activities. If Lincoln County Historical Association can provide an opportunity for young adults to become

interpreters of history, they might just become involved with LCHA after graduation.

Here's what we have in mind: with your help, we can offer students a summer internship at one of our three sites.

The student will train to be a tour guide and gain a better understanding of Lincoln County history. At the same time, LCHA will benefit from the help greeting summer visitors.

In this economy, we understand that young people need to be paid a stipend. Therefore, we are looking for benefactors for the program. The cost for this is \$1500. per intern.

Would you like to sponsor a student intern for Pownalborough Court House, The Museum and Old Jail, or Chapman-Hall House?

If so, please contact us at info@lincolncountyhistory.org.

Education Outreach

By Louise Miller

Fall is in full swing and so is the LCHA Education Outreach program. Fifty-seven teachers have been contacted with information on the new offerings for 2015-2016 including an eight minute video disc.

New themes this year are *The Ship Captain's Wife* and *Before the Judges*. The first theme is an in-school presentation that offers students a look at the trades that were active in Lincoln County from the end of 18th through the early 19th centuries. *Before the Judges* engages students in the conduct of a trial. This program, which includes in-class presentations and site visits to the Pownalborough Court House and the 1811 Old Jail, offers the students a look at the judicial

system in use at the beginning of the 19th century. The students will prepare for court using a case from the Lincoln County Archives of the early 19th century.

Knowing that many schools have limited funds for field trips, a survey has begun of school principals to learn the costs of busing children to the various LCHA sites. In the future LCHA may, with donor participation, establish a fund to help offset field trip busing costs.

During the winter months work will begin on new lesson resources for classroom work. We look forward to networking with teachers and students during this school year.

Uncovering the Past

By Lea Wait

Historical research is done by librarians, historians, genealogists, doctoral candidates, homeowners wondering about the history of their homes, and grade school students reluctantly fulfilling classroom assignments.

I've done all of the above, at various points in my life. But now I do historical research primarily because I write historical novels set in 19th century Wiscasset.

I've always loved the idea of "place" influencing the people who lived in it, so my goal is to show, in a series of stand-alone books, how people in a small Maine village lived during different time periods.

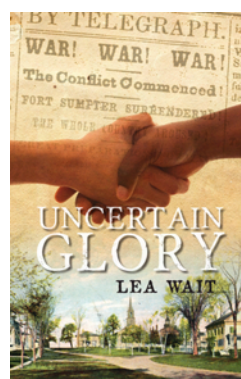
Why Wiscasset? Because Wiscasset "had it all," in terms of history. Abenaki lands, early European settlers, citizens taking part in every

war Maine has been involved in, a deep-water harbor surrounded by farmlands and lumbering. Mills. Fires. Inns. Wiscasset was on the Boston Post line. The railroad came to Wiscasset.

Stopping to Home (set in 1806) and Seaward Born (1805-1807) show Wiscasset when it was the largest port east of Boston. Wintering Well (1819-1820) is set against a background of new statehood. *Finest Kind* (1838) shows the result of the Panic of 1837. And *Uncertain Glory* (1861) takes place during the first two weeks of the Civil War.

My major characters are fictional, but the minor characters are the real people who lived in Wiscasset.

How do I find out about them? I search the Wiscasset Library archives files on "doctors" and "lawyers" and "houses," and reading through newspapers, files on Wiscasset families, and letters. I don't just collect names; I collect lives. The Lincoln County Courthouse has records of who was in jail when and for what offense. They also have customs records of ships arriving, homes built and changing hands, and legal cases in Lincoln County. Wiscasset's graveyards help with dates, and raise new questions. (Why would a man be buried next to only his first wife, when he was married three times?)



In *Uncertain Glory* my protagonist is an actual teenager who published Wiscasset's newspaper in the mid-nineteenth century. His diary is at the Maine Historical Society archives in Portland. The newspapers he published are in the Wiscasset Library. Files on his family

helped me place him in town, and write historical notes about what happened after the book was finished.

Other research? I read extensively in political, military, religious, and philosophical analyses of what was happening in the United States during the year(s) I'm writing about. I choose year-and-place appropriate names for fictional characters. I search dictionaries published in New England during the year(s) I'm writing about, to ensure I use words authentically. I study maps. I collect old medical books, books of old recipes, lists of kitchen utensils, weapons, tools, and laws. I read studies of the ways in which women, children, minorities, and the handicapped were treated, through both laws and practices.

All these pieces of research become fodder for the background of my books; sometimes even the basis for specific scenes. But the most important research I do is on my protagonists and their family; how they fit into the community, how they would react to events around them, and what decisions they would make.

Award-winning author Lea Wait lives in Edgecomb and is a former LCHA board member. She's written fifteen books, five of them set in 19th century Wiscasset. She also writes two contemporary mystery series. For more information about Lea and her books, see www.leawait.com, and friend her on Facebook and Goodreads.

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www.lincolncountyhistory.org

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Lincoln County Historical
Association (Maine)

Stewardship Reports

Chapman-Hall House

By Louise Miller

Special events and increased attendance made for a busy summer season at Chapman-Hall House. On opening weekend in June, costumed historians acted out 'Three Traditions,' presenting Native American New England history, A Militiaman and his Gear, and The Use of Navigational Tools. In July, the annual yard sale helped many folks clean out their cellars and attics. As the season began to wind down, a showing of 'Fashions in Colonial New England' featured everyday wear and special occasion garments typical of the mid-18th century

These events, as well as news releases focusing on various aspects of the Chapman-Hall House, and the presence of Mrs. Miriam Chapman (our costumed mannequin who greets those passing by from the yard), are credited with increasing our season's attendance by 60%.



Jeff Miller demonstrates a navigational tool

The Stewardship Committee welcomed Mrs. Karen Campbell of Newcastle as a docent this summer. Docents at Chapman-Hall House work in pairs one or two days a month; the House is open Saturdays and Sundays, Noon to 4 PM. If you enjoy visiting with people and sharing history, please get in touch! Contact Natalie House at

563-8441 or Louise Miller through the LCHA e-mail (info@lincolncountyhistory.org).

The Collection Committee continued recording Chapman-Hall House artifacts, most recently focusing on the second floor. This winter, efforts will be turned to producing new signage for the ell of the House. The theme of this endeavor will be the local tradesmen whose tools and work are exhibited in the ell. This signage project is being supported in part through a Davis Foundation grant.

Pownalborough Court House

By Merry Fossel



The Court House has had a busy summer, beginning with the 61st annual Memorial Day Observance led by Masonic Chaplain Bruce Alexander of Dresden, assisted by a local Revolu-

tionary War Living History group. On July 12th Pownal-borough Court House (PCH) hosted Dresden's annual SummerFest, with activities for the whole family, local crafts, exhibits by community organizations, horse drawn rides, a petting zoo and a pie contest.

On August 2nd, LCHA's own Mike Dekker spoke to a group of 35 on his new book, *The French and Indian Wars in Maine*. The book, the newest addition to the History Press' Military series, covered eight decades and six

distinct wars among colonizers and Native American tribes, a tragic and largely forgotten struggle that laid the foundation of Maine. Mike is a former LCHA board member, a long time member of the PCH Committee, and a living historian.

On October 4th historian Jim Leamon gave a well-attended talk on Charles E. Allen, the man who wrote the *History of Dresden, Maine*. The talk covered the formative influences of his youth, military service in the Civil War, his move from Cambridge, Mass. to Dresden and his role as a local historian. People came from as far as Thomaston to hear the talk – a one of a kind event for people with Dresden roots.

Our summer intern this year was Amanda Silverman, of Dresden. She did a wonderful job of organizing docents and leading tours herself. After her service as an intern, Amanda joined the committee. This summer also saw more work on the grounds, including clearing brush along the river, greatly improving the view.

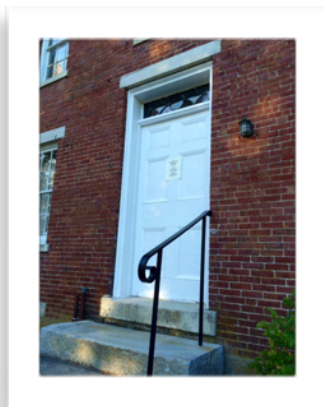
The PCH is hosting school and home-school tours until the third week in October. A closing up day will be held at the end of October. We will get the word out soon and would welcome any help LCHA members can give.

The Old Jail

By Christine Hopf-Lovette

Business was brisk at The Old Jail this summer. We greeted over 100 more visitors than 2014. The increase, we think, is a result of a special exhibit and additional roadside signage. The exhibit, *Wiscasset, 1900 - 1950*, highlighted national and international events that affected the citizens of Wiscasset during that period.

Several building maintenance issues have been successfully addressed. The deteriorating windows on the third floor gable on the east end of the Jail were removed and replaced with clapboard siding. The facade now looks very much as it did originally, since the windows had been installed many years after the Jail was built. Although there was a great deal of evidence of bats early in the season, additional screening seems to have helped to keep the critters out. Mean-while, we are in the process of purchasing a shop vac with a HEPA filter so that we can keep the surfaces clean. Finally, the wooden railing at the entrance has been replaced with a fine wrought iron handrail created by Bryan Buck.



New wrought iron handrail

Before winter sets in a mason will repair mortar between bricks on the south-facing wall of the Jailer's House. He will also mortar a number of granite blocks that have been forced outward by moisture and winter weather.

Volunteer docents opened the Jail on several weekdays during the season in order to accommodate homeschool groups, campers, and a special-needs group (these numbers were not included in the visitor account above). And on one fine Saturday afternoon, a wedding was held on Jail grounds overlooking the Sheepscot.

In response to a recent inquiry from law students in Brazil, several Old Jail docents

explained why they thought our jail museum was intriguing to visitors. The law students felt that our answers were helpful in their research of former jails all over the world that have been converted to tourist attractions.

Lincoln County Historical Association

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Email info@lincolncountyhistory for a contribution reply envelope You can use it to:

- renew your membership
- make a special donation
- volunteer for a committee or offer your services
- update your mailing address
- add your email address

LCHA at work and play....



Yard Sale at the Old Jail



Ed describes farm implements to students



Summer Party at Pownalborough Court House