

LCHA CHRONICLE

Lincoln County Historical Association

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President's Letter

As we begin the New Year, we face both challenges and opportunities. The pandemic is not over. But we remain committed to preserving and interpreting Lincoln County's rich history and we will continue to innovate and move forward—safely. We are pleased to announce a theme for 2022: "Women Writers of Lincoln County" with several exciting plans and programs in the works to highlight and celebrate the role that women writers have played in our county. Stay tuned for more details in the coming months.

We ring in the New Year with several new faces on LCHA's Board of Trustees. John Hendrickson, Scot McFarlane, Scott Silverman, Rick Snyder, Luke Suttmeier, and Jamey Tanzer have all agreed to join the Board (or re-join, in Jamey's case). You can find full biographical information about each of them on our website.

I also wish to thank Linda Pope and Jeff Miller, who termed off the Board at the end of 2021. Linda and Jeff have done so much for LCHA over the years. Linda served in many capacities: helping run membership drives, plan events, and most notably as our Board Secretary. Jeff has shared his extensive knowledge of historical tools and mechanical operations with our organization and our Collections Committee.

I would be remiss to not thank outgoing Board President Michael Chaney for his dedication to LCHA over the past several years. Michael's leadership was critical to maintaining a sense of stability and steadiness to our group during unsettling times.

Thank you so much to our members, volunteers, donors, visitors, and friends who have helped us navigate these turbulent times. We are so appreciative of your generosity and support.

With a nod to our 2022 theme, it only seems fitting to end my first note as President with a statement from the estimable Rachel Carson, who spent many summers on Lincoln County's Southport Island: *There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.*

Ryan LaRochelle

President, LCHA Board of Trustees



Ryan LaRochelle

It's that time of year....

Love (of history) is in the air! And there's no better time to learn about Lincoln County's Maude Clark Gay, who based her love stories in historical Lincoln County.

by Shannon Gilmore, Executive Director

In 1923 Maude Clark Gay (1876-1952) of Waldoboro wrote, "I have been interested for years in historical matters concerning the State, and my last two books deal with the romance and history of several of the towns and cities of Maine." With her unique way of wrapping up a love of place with the romantic, it seems fitting to learn more about Gay this Valentine's season.

Besides her work as a community leader who served in the Maine Senate and Maine House of Representatives and offered her talents to a number of local organizations, Gay was a prolific writer. It's clear that she loved local history, since historical themes cropped up frequently in her writing that was often set in this region. Gay's published works sound pretty romantic and in fact, she wrote a series of short stories titled *Little Romances of Early Maine* (published ca. 1930). Her earlier work, *The Knitting of the Souls*, published in 1904, was favorably reviewed by *The Club Fellow: The Society Journal of New York and Chicago*, Volume 6 as "a puritan story with a tang." I haven't gotten my hands on a copy of this book yet, but I'm so curious to read more!

Thanks to Terry Hapack of Skidompha Public Library for research and transcription help, here's an excerpt of Gay's local love story, *The Reward: a tale of the early days of Pemaquid*:

A loud, imperative knock sounded on the door of the Commandant's house.

The upper part of the door had a casement of green wood, and Mistress Faith, the Commandant's daughter, opened it at the summons and peered cautiously out. At first she beheld only the familiar view of the little settlement with its neat houses of stone and

wood, the great fort with the banner emblazoned with the cross of St. George floating over it, the harbor of Pemaquid, then called Jamestown, "the capital of the East," and from beyond the turbulent blue of the ocean sweeping away to meet the sky.

A low laugh drew her attention, and she saw a handsome stranger standing at a little distance looking up at her with merry eyes. He was dressed in a dashing riding cloak, with plumed hat and high boots and presented a pleasing spectacle seldom visible to the eyes of the maids of early Pemaquid. In a moment, hat in hand, he had drawn near, still looking up at her with that disconcerting smile.

"I was to ask shelter and food." He said, "but the sight of such loveliness has made me forget I have not eaten or slept for two days.

2022 Special exhibit: Women Writers of Lincoln County

by Alice Smith Duncan

A large, oval-framed daguerreotype of a mature woman presides over an upper shelf in the dimly lit Collections storage rooms of the Old Jail Museum, as it has for well over fifty years. Her elaborate white-lace widow's bonnet sets off an intelligent, clear-eyed face that betrays just a hint of amusement.



This portrait inspires the theme of LCHA's Summer 2022 exhibition, *Women Writers of Lincoln County*, for she is none other than Madame Wood (more specifically, Sally Sayward Barrell Keating Wood, 1759-1855), Maine's first woman fiction writer and, at the time of building of the Old Jail (1809-1811), Wiscasset's leading lady. Her

husband, General Abiel Wood, was closely involved in the design, siting, and construction of the then-new Jail until his death in 1811.

As a Maine writer she's most remembered not just as the first woman to publish fiction, but for inventing the American Gothic novel; and, while Madam Wood did not do most of her writing while living in today's Lincoln County, the Lincoln County of her youth encompassed more than 90% of the State of Maine in Massachusetts, including York, her birthplace.

A stunning range and number of women writers, past and present, have called Lincoln County home. In researching Madam Wood's contribution to the history of Maine writers, LCHA member Alice Smith Duncan proposed an exhibition focused on Lincoln County women's contributions to literature. Virtually each town of the county boasts a woman writer of renown, and more fine writers are drawn to and from our region each year. Lincoln County lays claim to an abundance of influential literary women – native-born, in-migrants, summer citizens, retirees – ranging from internationally acclaimed naturalist Rachel Carson to Newbery and Caldecott Award-winners Elizabeth Coatsworth and Barbara Cooney; from Pulitzer Prize-winning Ola Elizabeth Winslow to Heather Cox Richardson; from Lea Wait to Meredith Hall and other currently active fiction writers, historians, poets, memoirists, children's authors and illustrators. This summer's celebration of their remarkable achievements aims to bring new audiences to their work.

The LCHA Board and Executive Director Shannon Gilmore embrace the participation of all three sites for related events, lectures, workshops, or readings, and outreach to include libraries, schools and institutions. The Old Jail Museum will host an exhibit of related books, letters, illustrations, personal artifacts and objects.

LCHA Chronicle readers are invited to suggest other contemporary women writing fiction and non-fiction in Lincoln County to be included for acknowledgment.

Returning to normal

by Louise Miller, Education Director

It is with sincere gratitude that we acknowledge the receipt of a grant from the Burns Family Foundation in support of staffing and new equipment to meet the changing needs of students and their schools, both traditional and home schools.

Actually, there should be a question mark after the Normal in the title. (The impact of the Coronavirus doesn't seem to have an end date.) Yet, there is a light luring us on into the new year.

The light that I see is a return to in-person programming. Already, five weeks of summer are booked with programs, three of which are dedicated to our annual children's programming, *Summer with the Past – Discovering 18th and 19th Century Art, Crafts, & History*. The other two are filled by our new partnership with the Boothbay YMCA.

Before summer is actually upon us, a program on Immigrants during the 19th Century will be given at the Center for Teaching and Learning in Edgecomb. *History and Food* is again being offered through our partnership with the FARMS program at the Central Lincoln County YMCA in Damariscotta. The education staff is working with FARMS both at the Y and at schools. For example, in November the Bristol Consolidated School did their session at the Y, and the Nobleboro Central School cooked up their recipes at the school – both sessions focused on Native America foodways. South Bristol School will be attending a *History and Food* session at the Y during January.

Research has been ongoing for a new resource for educators that will offer insights to individuals, many from Maine, whose lives provide representative examples of various aspects of American life. The resource is designed to engage students and encourage them to dig deeper into those lives and events.

Lincoln County's most prolific lady of letters: Elizabeth Coatsworth (1893-1986) and her daughter, Maine's first Poet Laureate, Kate (Beston) Barnes (1932-2013)

by Laura McCandlish

Though less renowned than Damariscotta's late Barbara Cooney of *Miss Rumphius* fame, prolific poet and writer Elizabeth Coatsworth penned an estimated 127 total titles while living for decades in an early 19th century house at lakefront Chimney Farm in Nobleboro. There Elizabeth and her pioneering nature writer husband Henry Beston (contemporaries of close friend Rachel Carson and Anne Morrow Lindbergh) raised two daughters, Meg and Kate (Beston) Barnes, Maine's first poet laureate. In 1931, Elizabeth won the Newbery Medal for *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*, practically her sole work still in print.

After marrying relatively late in life in 1929, Elizabeth and Henry first spent an idyllic season on an unspoiled Damariscotta "Pond" (no motorboats, fewer waterfront cottages then) living among loons on a friend's rustic boat. She wrote that adventure into another admired children's book, *Houseboat Summer* (published by Macmillan Co. in 1942, illustrated by Marguerite Davis). Transcending genres, Elizabeth's books ranged from poetry to memoir to a Random House four-book adult fantasy fiction series set in Maine. She penned young adult novels about Vikings coming to North America, Native Americans in the Southwest and the *Away Goes Sally* children's historical fiction series featuring an ox-sled-drawn log cabin in a family's wintertime move from Massachusetts to Maine just before the War of 1812. A geography primer taught in 3rd grade classrooms, at least around Rockland, featured a young girl riding cross-country with her parents, from Maine to California. Elizabeth reviewed her own rich life in *Personal Geography: Almost an Autobiography* (1976).

"There are certain figures in 20th century literature that disappear, and shouldn't," said poet Gary

Lawless, who with his wife, Beth Leonard, owns Gulf of Maine Books in Brunswick. "Kids books are timeless."



A carved replica of the family cabin drawn by oxen featured in Away Goes Sally resides in the LCHA archives.

In 1986, when Elizabeth died at age 94, daughter Kate invited Gary and Beth to caretake her late parents' 90-acre property, effective immediately, furnishings and books left on-site (Beston died in 1968). The farm was once hayed with oxen and horses, which Beth and Gary eventually replaced with two cheery donkeys, named Clementine and Mavis, who now inhabit the barn. The couple inherited the farmhouse plus three acres when Kate, who phoned Beth and Gary almost daily, reciting poetry at all hours day and night, died in 2013.



Elizabeth Coatsworth and her husband, nature writer Henry Beston, at ease in their Nobleboro kitchen.

The rest of Chimney Farm's almost 87 acres remain permanently protected under Midcoast Conservancy easements. Coatsworth's civilized, sociable spirit still infuses the property. Neighbors recalled her inviting the mailman in for afternoon tea, or more likely, sherry.

Upon graduation from Vassar College during the First World War, Elizabeth journeyed to Asia, including the Philippines, China and Mongolia's Gobi Desert. Those travels inspired her first book of poetry, nominated for both the Yale Younger Poets and the Borzoi prizes, Lawless recounted. (As a teenage prodigy, daughter Kate had her first poem published in the *New Yorker* magazine.) Learning about Buddhism while touring Japanese temples on that trip also inspired her Newbery award-winning *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*. She later traversed Morocco and Tunisia on camelback (Cooney's illustration of a young "Ms. Rumphius" comes to mind) and Guatemala on a donkey.

"They loved to travel, and when they did, she'd gather material for a kid's book," Lawless said.

Now, with the recent release of the novels of Mount Desert Islander Ruth Moore, Islandport Press and others told Lawless of their interest in reintroducing readers to Elizabeth Coatsworth. Someone, even a high school student, should write a proper Coatsworth biography, Lawless urges.

As the elderly Elizabeth grew ill, daughter Kate returned to Maine to care for her on Appleton Ridge. Before Elizabeth's death, Kate asked Lawless to republish her mother's prize-winning chapbook of poetry. "So her first book was her very last, too," he jokes. And at the end of Elizabeth's funeral in the pasture next to the farmhouse, Kate asked Gary to read two of her poems "so that she had the last word."

"I have always hated to wait for things," Lawless read from *Personal Geography*. "I think I will go to meet whatever it is."

Visit the gravesites of Coatsworth, Beston and Barnes in the family cemetery at 617 East Neck Rd., Nobleboro. UNE's Maine Women Writers Collection maintains Coatsworth's correspondence, photographs and books. Reporting here based on an interview with Gary Lawless.



Elizabeth tends her garden on the 90-acre property they called Chimney Farm.

Laura McCandlish is a mother, writer and community-connector living in Brunswick near the Bowdoin campus. A native of Richmond, Va., she interviewed women writers studying abroad in China while at Davidson College. Follow Laura on Twitter @baltimoregon.

We look forward to launching Women Writers of Lincoln County programs in the spring!

We are now seeking funding for our 2022 Summer Intern Program..If you wish to support our internship opportunities please indicate so on your check's memo line or with an additional note.

Stewardship Reports

Pownalborough Court House

by Dave Probert



The Pownalborough Court House had a very successful season for tours and events. The latest events were Cider Pressing and Halloween. Although it was a bit wet during the Cider Pressing we still had many visitors and processed about 35 gallons. Halloween was also a great success with over 100 visitors and we had many compliments for putting together an event for both children and adults.

The Stewardship Committee is already considering upcoming events for the 2022 season, which will kick off with the annual Memorial Day event. This is such a moving and important event, honoring veterans from three American wars buried at the Old Court House Cemetery: Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and the Civil War. It also gives us time to reflect on how life would have been, living in this historic building.

Follow us on FaceBook at *Pownalborough Court House Museum* to keep up on our activities

Museum & Old Jail

by David Pope

The Museum and Old Jail (MOJ) of the LCHA has its own subcommittee that deals with the building's maintenance. Just a few years ago Ed Kavanagh, Bill Sutter, Greg Shaw, Bill Danielson and David Pope produced a spread sheet of all the issues they could identify as to cost, who will take the lead, priority etc. Many of the issues such as rebuilding the shed, gutter repair, repointing the exterior masonry, rain-proofing brickwork, replastering the stairway hall, reglazing windows etc., have been accomplished.

Remaining issues include repointing the interior masonry in the cell blocks, rebuilding the downstairs fireplace surrounds and replastering the parlor and dining room in which they reside. Along with that major project, the woodwork in those rooms would have its lead paint mitigated and replaced with proper materials. The current thick layers of paint are starting to peel and pucker. The worst of that damage will be prettied up before next summer's opening, but the larger project looms.



The roadside sign needs to be updated and made more attractive. Most of the building was rewired last year to include a few more grounded outlets in the showrooms and updated lighting fixtures in the workrooms. Several modern-looking light fixtures are being replaced by something more appropriate.

The MOJ bat colony is hibernating as we speak. Attempts to discourage them have so far been frustrating. Greg Shaw, who has kept the MOJ grounds impeccably mowed and trimmed for the past 25 years, is stepping off his mower. Thank you Greg for your long service! Trimming of bushes and trees, and encouraging certain apple trees and maintaining a trail across the property has been taken on by Judith and Bill Sutter. Huge thanks to them also. We look forward to presenting the gazebo in a way that will enhance the stark simplicity of the MOJ grounds. We welcome anyone who would like to help with these projects.

Chapman-Hall House

by Louise Miller



As those of us who steward the Chapman-Hall House look forward to a productive 2022, we reflect on the strength that has supported the integrity of this historic site. An historic site is little more than a collection of things. People give those meaning. Those same people clean, do maintenance, work as curators, and work on the front lines as docents. At Chapman-Hall all of these roles are filled by volunteers.

When the Chapman-Hall House was turned over to LCHA in 2008, Elizabeth Potter came with it. Elizabeth had been a docent at the house while it was under the care of the Chapman-Hall House Preservation Society. Over the years, Elizabeth has been a LCHA Board Trustee and committee

member for various LCHA projects. Early on, Elizabeth's husband Sarg joined the Chapman-Hall Stewardship Committee. In addition to fundraising and guiding tours, they have spring and fall housekeeping down to a science.

Bill and Deane Brewer are longtime committee members, drawn to the House through Bill's Chapman family connection. Deane has organized a number of fundraising events on a yearly basis. Natalie House was the stewardship committee's historian. Having been raised in Damariscotta and with knowledge gleaned from her mother who wrote a history of the area, Natalie was the go-to person for local information. Natalie is now a member emerita, but ever ready to discuss local lore. When it comes to knowing the ins and outs of the house's structure, Darryn Petersen is the steward who has the expertise. Louise and Jeff Miller joined the committee when Jeff became a LCHA trustee several years ago, bringing to the committee their museum work experience.

Karen and Bruce Campbell check on the House almost weekly. During the open season they are docents and are ever ready to assist with any project.

Our docents also contribute to the strength of the stewardship committee. Over the years, Doris Pierce, Tim Clark, Bob LeBeau, Ernie McNiff, Carol Sargent, Rose Marie Ballard, and Zibette Dean (herb garden expert), and more recently Lonnie and Ken Kennedy-Patterson, have shared the unique history of Chapman-Hall with summer visitors and school children.

Special programs and fundraising events are on the drawing board for the new year. Knowing the strength of the people bending over the drawing board, we look forward to sharing with the LCHA membership, and all visitors, the life and times of Mr. & Mrs. Nathaniel Chapman and Mr. & Mrs. Tilden Hall.

Site photos by Christine Hopf-Lovette

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Lincoln County Historical Association (Maine)



Instagram: [historicallincolncounty](https://www.instagram.com/historicallincolncounty)

UPCOMING

February's Black History Month Zoom Programs: We will hear from historian Bob Green, whose work focuses on Maine's Black history, and from James Tanzer about his research uncovering the life of Quash, a Black man in 18th century Lincoln County. Dates and registration information will be available on our website.