



DOWNEAST MAINE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Crystal Hitchings, *Director of Community Promotion, Sunrise County Economic Council*

National Heritage Areas are places where the historic relationship between people and landscape has contributed significantly to the cultural and natural heritage of the nation, and where that heritage story remains intact on the landscape.

Downeast Maine embodies a nationally important story about America’s northern Atlantic coastal frontier and international relations with eastern Canada and the Wabanaki Tribes. The landscape, people, and events of Downeast Maine have been and remain today examples of political, cultural, economic, and physical “borders” that create the unique experience of life on the easternmost edge of the United States. Downeast Maine tells this story through an enduring natural-resources economy and nature-based way of life; naturally inspired and world renowned tourism and arts; patterns of early American settlement; and deep relationships between the United States and Canada, and between Maine and the Wabanaki tribes.

Downeast Maine is a historic term dating to the late 18th century that references the direction ships sailed from cities like Philadelphia and New York—downwind and to the east—as supplies were transported to and from northern communities along the coast of Maine and Canada’s Maritime Provinces. Today, “Downeast” is primarily used in reference to the easternmost coastal section of Maine between the Penobscot and St. Croix Rivers, encompassing Washington and Hancock Counties and Passamaquoddy Tribal land. Downeast Maine also corresponds with the historical French territory of l’Acadie, or Acadia. The cultural and natural borders and edges at interplay within this area of Maine,

Wabanaki territory, and eastern Canada have helped to and continue to shape, supply, and inspire our nation—and the people and communities of Downeast Maine—in numerous ways.



National Heritage Areas connect and actively engage communities with natural, historic, and cultural sites through educational activities that promote awareness and foster stewardship of heritage resources that are most important to communities.



The national importance of Downeast Maine was federally recognized when the proposal to create the Downeast Maine National Heritage Area was passed by Congress on December 23, 2022, as part of a monumental National Heritage Areas Act, along with six other new National Heritage Areas. The Downeast Maine National Heritage Area was signed into public law on January 5, 2023. The designation includes Washington and Hancock Counties, whose landscape, economy, culture, communities, history, and ancestral stories are deeply intertwined.

The National Heritage Area (NHA) program was created in 1984 to provide communities with the tools and assistance they need to develop their own heritage programs that support community and economic development driven by a community’s unique assets and local priorities. The program is intended to help build a sustainable local economy by leveraging federal funds to create jobs, generate revenue for local governments, and invigorate local communities. As of 2023, there are 62 National Heritage Areas in the United States: Downeast is the only one in Maine.

NHAs connect and actively engage communities with natural, historic, and cultural sites through educational activities that promote awareness and foster stewardship of heritage resources that are most important to communities. This is done through collaborative initiatives bringing diverse organizations and people together to develop networks that strengthen and expand our work, adding more dimensions to our programs.

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The four core values of the National Heritage Area program directly align with values of communities across Downeast Maine. These are:

1. Sustainable economic development,
2. Healthy environment and people,
3. Education and stewardship, and
4. Community engagement and pride

Goals of the NHA program also align with those of communities and organizations across Downeast Maine who strive to: foster community-driven, heritage-based conservation and economic development; engage people in learning about, sharing, and stewarding our natural and cultural heritage; build regional collaborations and capacity to achieve mutual goals; develop education programs and learning opportunities around local heritage; and develop a sustainable tourism industry founded in local culture and outdoor heritage

NHAs can help communities develop new or improved amenities and programs, and educational and volunteer opportunities. NHAs can also strengthen community and organizational capacity to achieve collective goals. The Downeast Maine NHA will support local initiatives such as: community events; arts and cultural programs; educational programs; historic preservation; parks and trails; and downtown revitalization

The NHA program does bring financial benefits with designation. The amount of available funds are determined through the annual federal budget approval process for the National Park Service. Currently, once fully established, NHAs typically receive an average of \$350,000/year. The Downeast Maine NHA can offer a sub-granting program, with a 1:1 local match, for priority NHA projects to schools, municipalities, and non-profit organizations.

All funds are held locally, and projects are determined and managed by a collaboration of local heritage groups within the NHA region. In this case, Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC), based in Machias, will provide fiscal agency and administration and a staff person to coordinate the program. The program will be guided by a steering committee comprised of entities that represent the primary aspects of our heritage story.

NHA designation does not mean that an area becomes a unit of the National Park Service or federal government, and they are not operated or governed in any manner by the National Park Service or any other arm of the federal government.

Guidelines and restrictions for NHAs include the following:

- Federal funds are prohibited from being used to acquire property.
- NHAs are not a tool to regulate land use or remove municipal or private jurisdiction. Only municipalities can make decisions about land use through their normal public process.
- NHAs do not create new expenses for a community to bear; rather, they support existing organizations to accomplish their goals, and those organizations provide matching funds for projects as they normally would.

Over the next couple of years, a team of community members, led by SCEC staff, will develop a management plan that will guide development and promotion of NHA infrastructure and programs. The management plan outlines objectives and strategies that align with local and regional economic development goals and is developed through an extensive public process across the region that incorporates all aspects of the nationally important story.

Once a management plan is completed, the Downeast Maine NHA will receive matching federal funds that allow us to implement regional programs and projects. All NHA programs are managed differently according to local needs and their particular NHA story. Some NHAs offer grants to local entities, some implement their own programs, and some do both. The Downeast Maine NHA does intend to offer sub-grants to schools, municipalities, and non-profit organizations for collaborative projects that align with public priorities as determined through the management planning process.

The current focus of management planning is learning from individuals and communities across the region about their goals and objectives for the program, what initiatives they are currently working on or hope to work on, and what outcomes they would like to achieve.

For more information or to invite SCEC staff to a visioning session with your organization, community group, or a “local expert” in our heritage topics, contact Crystal Hitchings at chitchings@sunrisecounty.org or by phone at 207-707-2057

Please visit sunrisecounty.org/nha to learn more about NHAs.

HOW CANNING SEALED THE DEAL ON MAINE'S BLUEBERRY INDUSTRY

Kaysie Logan, Program Director, Wild Blueberry Heritage Center

The Civil War, coupled with industrial developments of modern food preservation techniques and the railroad, paved the way for the wild blueberry industry's importance in Maine today. The wild blueberry, one of three commercially grown crops native to North America, is a product of the rocky glacial soils of Maine and Canada's maritime provinces. The unique crop has been tended by the Wabanaki tribes for centuries, mastering techniques such as pruning by fire. These techniques were taught to English settlers in the 1600s, and the vast blueberry fields were harvested as commons for public consumption until the blueberry canning industry sealed the fate of the commercial blueberry industry in Maine.

The advent of canning opened a lot of doors for the Maine wild blueberry, enabling growers to sell their crop to buyers that lived further away or during the off season. In 1863, the Portland Packing Company pioneered the process of canning agricultural produce in airtight containers, largely to meet the wartime demand for nonperishable food. During the Civil War, when soldiers were suffering from malnutrition, seafood canneries along Maine's coast began shipping wild blueberries by sea to Union troops to fend off scurvy. In 1866, the Portland Packing Company built the first blueberry cannery in Cherryfield. Soon after, the canned berries became a food staple because of their convenience, ease of storage, and health benefits. This led to an industrial boom in Downeast Maine, with many canneries opening in quick succession. By the 1950s, there were 21 canning factories in Maine,

including Jasper Wyman & Sons, who had operated a seafood cannery in Milbridge since 1874 and stewarded barrens of their own.

This industrial boom was aided by the development of the railroad. The Maine Central Railroad Company opened in 1862, spanning 1,358 miles by 1888. The railway connected most of New England to Canada and enabled travelers to explore Downeast Maine and beyond. Blueberry factories were often built along the railroad to facilitate shipping their products. The Washington County Railroad was built in 1898. It ran many years and serviced factories along the coast for shipping products. In 1911 it was acquired by Maine Central Railroad Company and renamed the Calais branch. The last passenger car traveled the line in 1957. The Downeast Scenic Railroad leased the leg between Bangor and Washington Junction in 2006 to operate as a heritage railway for tourism.



Ellsworth Maine Central Railroad Station, constructed 1928.

In 1925, Clarence Birdseye pioneered food freezing, and by the 1940s, most wild blueberries were being frozen to preserve flavor, color, and nutrients. In 1949, G.M. Allen & Son opened a cannery in Blue Hill. The cannery operated until the company switched to the IQF (individual quick freezing) berries in 1976. During the summer of 2022, Simeon Allen of W.R. Allen's Wild Blueberries in Orland, ME, donated an antique canning sealer to the newly formed Wild Blueberry Heritage Center. This particular Continental Canning Company sealer mostly sealed No. 10 size cans, which held about a gallon of berries. Most berries were cooked in a Burnham cooker that used steam to cook the berries to help preserve them.

Wild blueberries are a defining part of Maine's history and culture. Nearly 500 Maine farmers manage some



Conveyor belt of antique canning operation, donated by Simeon Allen of W.R. Allen's Wild Blueberries.

36,000 acres of commercial blueberry barrens, which help give the state's landscape its distinctive look and feel. In recent years, however, Maine's wild blueberry growers have faced increasing challenges, including climate change, declining production, and shifts in the farm economy and land ownership that threaten the survival of many smaller growers. A blueberry-growing community and culture that has helped shape Maine livelihoods for generations is at risk of fading away.

Read more about the Wild Blueberry Heritage Center—a nonprofit, community-based organization dedicated to keeping Maine's wild blueberry culture alive and well—at www.wildblueberryheritagecenter.org.

You can also visit the organization's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/WildBlueberryHeritageCenter or visit www.instagram.com/wildblueberryheritagecenter/.



Canning exhibit inside the Wild Blueberry Heritage Center.

THE LOIS C. JOHNSON HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Charlene Clemmons, *Curator, Hancock Historical Society*

The town of Hancock has been home to many artists, authors, and musicians. The first artist of major stature was Miss Beulah True, who was the daughter of Capt. Edward True and grew up at Mount Desert Ferry in a house built by her father. The True family moved from Castine to Hancock when Capt. True was commissioned to captain the first steamer from Hancock to Bar Harbor, prior to the Ferry terminus built by Maine Central Railroad Company in 1884.

Miss True left to study at the Cooper Union School in New York City. From then on she lived mostly in New York, coming home summers to stay with family. She was famous for her gold leaf work on Waltham clock

faces, glass, and mirrors. Beulah restored clock faces for collectors and was also adept at “reverse painting” on glass—paintings that were done backwards, nearly a lost art today. On the right is an example of her use of this technique for a banjo clock insert.

Beulah also illustrated fashions for magazines including McCall's, Delineator, and Butterick magazines. While she was summering in Hancock, she was known to take time from her work to teach local children drawing and painting.

We are fortunate to have some of her drawings and a few pieces of her glass work in our collection at the museum. The museum is open June to October, Tuesday and Wednesday mornings and on Saturday afternoon. We are open the rest of the year by appointment. You can also visit our page on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/hancockhistoricalsociety>. Our email is: hancockmehistoricalociety@gmail.com.

The image on the left is one of Beulah True's paintings, which can be seen in our museum.



CASTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ACQUIRES NEW PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION

Jules Thomson, *Collections Manager, Castine Historical Society*

I chuckled to myself today while looking at one of our recent “deeds of gift” (the legal document that people sign when they donate items to our collections, transferring custody to Castine Historical Society). A line on the document asks for a “donor’s appraisal.” Instead of a numerical amount, this donor had written “Priceless!” on the appraisal line. And I thought to myself, how true is that? Very true for most of our collection items, regardless of monetary worth. Knowledge and research value are the real currencies we deal in, especially with regard to the archival collections that comprise the majority of our holdings. In a literal sense, they are priceless—that is, they defy any sort of cost breakdown—because we never know how they will be used in the future, or whose lives might be altered by the knowledge they provide.

Over the past few months, the Castine Historical Society (CHS) has added many such “priceless” records to our collection, including substantial material from the Eastern State Normal School, and the full complement of Castine Patriot newspapers from 1980 onward. In both cases, these donations (from the Maine Maritime Academy and Witherle Memorial Library, respectively) have meant that CHS is now the primary access point for these records. We also recently received a donation of the original Trinitarian Congregational Parish records, which hold reams of fascinating information about 19th-century life in Castine.

The Historical Society’s collections are a combination of donated items and, less often, items purchased at auctions or antique stores. Purchases can come with a hefty price tag. CHS has a small collections acquisition budget, which allows us to acquire some archival records, objects, photographs, or books to add to our permanent collections. But occasionally we must prevail upon the generosity of financial donors, especially those who have a special interest in a new acquisition.



Sarah Perkins, Frances Whitney,
and Phebe Whitney

This was the case when we were alerted to the existence of an antique dealer’s collection of 33 cased photographs (daguerreotypes, ambrotypes, and tintypes from about 1850–1900) depicting members of the Whitney, Whiting, and Hatch families of Castine and Massachusetts, as well as several file folders worth of their family papers. These interrelated families were major citizens who affected Castine’s history. The Whitneys and Whittings are notable for producing several ships’ captains and merchants during the golden age of sail in the mid-1800s. Their story is inextricably tied to the

shipping economy of that era, which was featured in the Historical Society’s 2019 exhibit “Risky Business: Square Rigged Ships and Salted Fish.”

The case for purchasing these families’ photographs and papers seemed obvious, but they cost more than our annual acquisitions budget. To our delight, CHS members Richard Ames and Elizabeth Macdonald, descendants of the Whitney/Whiting/Hatch families, came to the rescue and covered the entire cost.

After receiving the photographs, we were eager to have them assessed for conservation. We sent them to Northeast Document Conservation Center in Andover, MA. Thanks to yet another generous monetary donation from various members of the Hatch family, we were able to have most of the photos professionally cleaned, stabilized, and even digitized as high-quality images. The process was an inspiring example of family descendants coming together to ensure the long-term preservation of their ancestors’ records.

Not only are the photographs a fantastic visual record of bygone Castine residents, they also represent the largest single collection of cased images held by CHS to date. You may view them, along with the rest of our collections, on our online catalog at castinehistoricalsociety.org under the “Collections” tab.

THREE NEW COLLECTIONS FOR ELLSWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Holly Hendricks, *Chair, Collections and Archives Committee*

The Collections and Archives Committee is happy to report that we have recently been deeded three new collections. We are currently making inventories of materials, assessing the condition of any items needing conservation, arranging and describing the materials, and planning for archival storage!

years) and their various topics of study. For later years, we have a number of the actual papers read as well as descriptions of the meetings.

In September we received a varied collection of postcards and original records and correspondence from a member of the Jordan family. Many are early photographic postcards, a number of which are of Maine. A companion album contained graphical postal greeting cards of all kinds.



In July we received 125 years of records from the Literature Club. Their early handwritten books of minutes describe each meeting in detail, including which member hosted the meeting, and the titles of papers read by members. Musical offerings were a regular part of some meetings. During some seasons, they published programs of the topics to be covered at each meeting. During the early 20th century, the club often chose a theme for the year, such as German literature, Modern literature, Art and Science, South and Central America, Holland, or the American South.

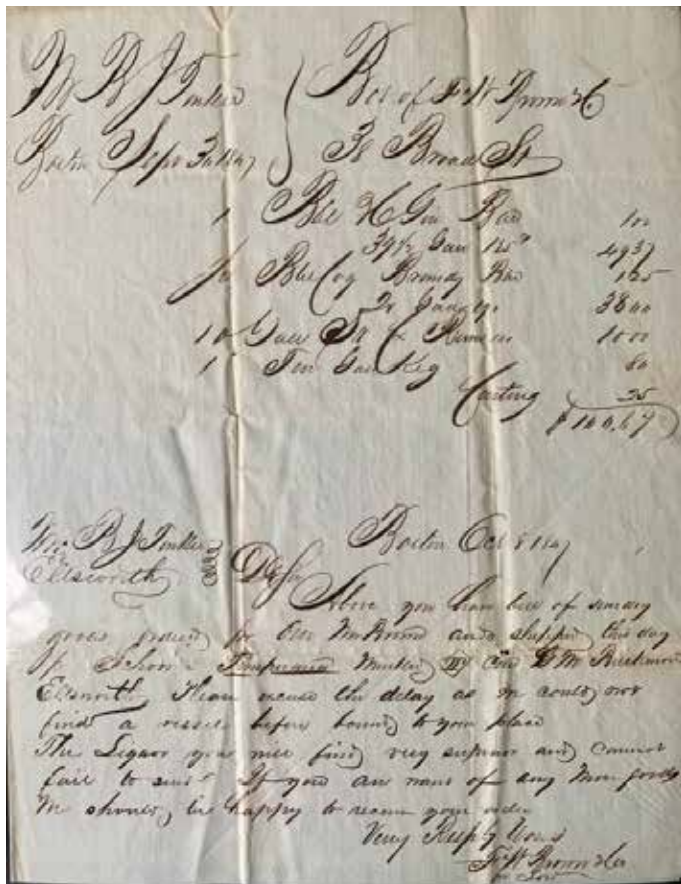
The records also contain membership lists, allowing us to trace the participation of generations of Ellsworth women (and a few men, in the earliest



Two binders of original records include merchant and land records as well as records relating to Ellsworth's early history, even including construction of the Ellsworth library.



Both Tinker and Jordan families are well represented. A large number of 19th century letters and documents were also donated as well as genealogical information related to the Jordan family.



The Gilbert and Sullivan Society decided an extensive collection of administrative records to us as well as documentation, programs, production notes, photos, and video recordings of many of their productions from the early 1980s through the early 2000s.



Shows included multiple productions over the years of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *Mikado*, *Princess Ida*, *Patience*, *Yeoman of the Guards*, *The Gondoliers*, and *Trial by Jury*.



Two images of members of the cast of the 1977 production of *The Gondoliers*.

The Ellsworth Historical Society is especially grateful to our donors who have made a financial contribution for the archival housing of their collections.



The poster for the 1978 production of *The Mikado*.

Visit the Ellsworth Historical Society online at: www.ellsworthhistory.org