

BEALS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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BHS TO HONOR VETS AT MARCH 17 MEETING

The 2008 annual meeting of the Beals Historical Society will be devoted to recognizing the living and deceased veterans of its island town, and to inviting those from surrounding communities to join the celebration. The meeting will be held Monday, March 17 in the Beals Elementary School gymnasium. The business part of the meeting begins at 6:30PM and the program starts at 7PM.

Members of the BHS hope that living veterans from Beals, Jonesport and other nearby towns will come and bring their medals, photos and any other memorabilia they have. Time in the program has been allotted for sharing stories of their war days at home and overseas. Selectman Daniel Davis will host the program, which is expected to begin with a color guard from the Jonesport coast guard station. BHS members will archive all the information presented.

The meeting is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

Alvin Beal House Donated to BHS

By Nancy Beal

The Alvin Beal homestead at the end of Church Street is destined to become the property of the BHS, President Carol Davis announced recently, heralding the gift from the current owner, Manford Durkee of Jonesport.

The legendary Beals boat builder purchased the property in 1926 from Vernard and Thurman Gould for a reputed \$450. Consisting of two lots that extend from Moosabec Reach on the north to the "south shore" (presumably Cranberry Cove), the deed's description traces back to 1854 in two deeds to William D. Beal. According to the descriptions in those deeds—one from Thomas R. W. Beal and the other from Thomas W. and Reuben L. Beal—the property encompassed approximately two-and-a-half acres, and abutted land already owned by William D. Beal, for his workshop is one of the landmarks. The 1854 deeds make no mention of structures, but the Goulds' deed to Alvin included "all buildings thereon standing." No one in Alvin's family knew when the homestead was built on the property, but there was some speculation that it might have been one several houses built on the island by one Jared Wright around the time of the Civil War. Marvin Kelley reports that Wright built his house, and the original parts of those of Elmer Peabody, Shirley Kelley, Clifton Alley, the Advent Christian parsonage, and the house now owned by Dennis McCormack, but he isn't sure whether Wright also built what became Alvin's homestead.

After Alvin's death in 1992, the grandchildren of his deceased son, Edward, deeded the property to Alvin's other child, Alberna Bunker, who recently sold it to Durkee. The house will

be moved to land at the old schoolhouse lot designated for use by the BHS.

Boat Builder Extraordinaire

Alvin Beal was born August 19, 1905, one of 10 children of Calista and Charles Roscoe Beal. Three of his seven brothers were boat builders: Vinal, Floyd and Mariner, known as "Lovie." His other brothers were Virgil, called "Uncle Butt" by family members, Kenneth, Elvestin and Austin, known as "Bertie." His sisters were Grace and Della Bernice. Alvin's first wife and mother of his two children was Beatrice Beal, a descendant of Tall Barney Beal, which Alvin was not. Years after Beatrice died of leukemia, Alvin married Sylvia (**anyone know her last name?**). At the time of his death in 1992, he had seven grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Today there are three more greats and seven great-great-grandchildren.

All of Alvin's contemporaries are gone, but his nephews and younger Beals boat builders were happy to share their memories of the prolific builder, and the stories started early on. Mariner Beal's son Isaac Beal said Vernal Woodward told him that, prior to 1920, boys walked barefoot from the head of the island to Alley's Bay, where Calista and Charles Roscoe Beal made their home in the house last lived in by Augusta Beal, to buy play boats from Alvin. Isaac and Willis Beal, no relative to Alvin but a frequent visitor to his shop, say Alvin worked with Jonesport builders Maurice Dow and Will Frost. Osmond "Buddy" Beal, whose grandson Erick Blackwood is carrying on the family boat building tradition in a new shop next to his grandfather's near the Sewall Field, recalls that his father, Vinal, helped Alvin build a boat for Bert Look. Isaac thinks his uncle's first independent boat, built in a small shop next to his Church Street homestead, was

built for Jimmy Beal who lived in Beals' Pig Island Gut district.

Boat launching was a well-attended event in the first half of the 20th century. Alvin's early boats were pulled out of the shop by many hands on both guardrails, and guided over a greased path to Cranberry Cove. When a Massachusetts man ordered a boat that was too big for Alvin's small shop, Isaac recalls, to coax him to build what he wanted, the buyer gave Alvin enough money to expand his shop, build a set of ways, and skid a vessel to splash into Moosabec Reach. Willis says Alvin told him he built over 200 large boats (one was for Willis' father, Alfred, who died the day after Alvin, and another that this writer traveled a lot served as a ferry from the mainland to Chebeague Island in Casco Bay), and nearly as many models. Willis said Alvin told him he kept track by the number of the stem heads he cut off each vessel. His son Edward was his helper until his early death in 1970; Joe Beal was his assistant after that.

After retiring from building big boats, Alvin turned to building models—at first for his own pleasure but, once word of their sleek lines and nautical accuracy leaked out, for profit. Drawing on his historical knowledge, he produced not just detailed, to-scale typical Beals Island lobster boats with miniature inboard motors, but also torpedo stern models like the ones that preceded the Beals Island style. (continued)



Beal brothers L-R Alvin, Virgil, Vinal, Mariner & Floyd
Absent: Kenneth, Austin, Elvestin Gracie & Della

When Willis was commissioned to build a full-size torpedo stern boat for the owners of Hardwood Island, he says he learned a lot from Alvin, who generously shared his knowledge of the early 20th century craft.

Most Beals Island boat builders also go lobster fishing, but Alvin sold his own lobster to Norman Chandler early on and then built boats year-round, accounting for his enormous productivity. Along the way and especially after he retired, he carved miniature buoys for friends and family members and painted them with their distinctive buoy colors, mounting them as pen holders or boring holes for key chains Using scraps of teak and oak, he fashioned clam rollers on legs for magazine racks and gave them away. Asked where Alvin learned his craft, Osmond shrugs his shoulders and says, "Born right in him!" As Alvin's house moves to the BHS site, it will help preserve the memory of what he accomplished in his lifetime as well as what he left behind.

ANNOUNCING 2008 ANNUAL BOAT AND TALENT SHOWS

BHS Annual Boat show will be held at the Beals Elementary School on Saturday April 19th from 3PM-7PM We are hopeful that this change in day and time will encourage more attendance by both local and long distance travelers. There is news from Chairman Brian Smith that Bradley Peabody will be displaying his newly handcrafted USS Constitution. This project has taken three years to complete. Peabody who continues to carry on the Beals Island tradition of model boat building is the grandson of the late Beals Island native Eileen Beal. We look forward to seeing this ship as well as the collections of all the model boat builders.

Also Bettina Merchant will have her 51" "Miss Beals" model lobster boat on display at the show and available for sale. The model was handcrafted by Chairman Brian Smith and is equipped to run. The proceeds for the sale will be split between the Beals Historical Society and the Beals Wesleyan Church.

Setup time for the show will be Saturday April 19th from 11AM-2PM. We invite and encourage all those with models to please come and share your craft with us.

The Annual Talent/Variety show will be held at the Beals Elementary School on Saturday May 3rd at 7PM. Watch DECP for more details. But rest assured it will be highly entertaining.

WEBSITE VOLUNTEER NEEDED

Currently, BHS is looking for someone who would volunteer to periodically update the website. Updating requires the use of Microsoft front page software and may occur twice per year. It does not matter what area of the country you live in. The site address is

www.moosabec.org. If you are interested, please email Carol Davis at cfDavis44@yahoo.com. Thank you!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 17/Annual Bus/Program mtg/6:30PM/BES
May 3/Talent/Variety Show/7PM/BES
April 19/Boat Show/3PM/BES
June 16/Program mtg/7PM/BES
June 28/Model Boat Race/NOON
September 15/Program mtg/7PM/BES
October/Elvis impersonator/TBA
 Please mark these events on your calendar and make a special effort to come and socialize with us. We truly value your involvement.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Currently the membership roll consists of 91 renewals, 2 new and 1 new life member. BHS wishes to welcome new members Susan Sheridan, Elaine Beal and Jan Flint.

We also wish to express condolences to the families of our members who have passed on. They will live on in our hearts forever.

At the end of 2007 we had a total of 174 members. Currently we have a total of 94. Our membership roll needs a boost! Please remember to renew yours today. Thank you!

OFFICERS

President: Carol Davis
Interim Vice President: Kenton Feeney
Secretary: Melinda Woodward
Treasurer: Almena Alley
Other Directors:
 Ruth Carver, Ray Beal & Brian Smith
Membership Chairman:
 Pamela Davis
Acquisitions Chairman:
 Paula McCormack & Pamela Taylor
Newsletter editors: Ray Beal & Carol Davis
Publicity Chairman: Ray Beal
Model Boat Show Chairman: Brian Smith
Mailing address: Beals Historical Society, PO Box 280, Beals ME 04611

ITS GARDEN PLANNING TIME

With spring fast approaching, the gardeners are getting fierce to start working the soil and if you had the misfortune to miss George Davis garden presentation at the January program meeting then this is your lucky newsletter! George has agreed to continue his presentation via this newsletter for the remainder of the year.

We will begin with strawberries. The two types are June and Ever bearing. June bearers bear their fruit all at one time. People who preserve by canning and freezing prefer the June bearing plant. Upon planting space the plants 18" apart and be careful not to bury the crown. This is the section between the base of the stem on the plant and the roots. The crown needs to be soil level. Just the top of the crown is exposed. This protects the plant from being smothered. Due to the energy needing to go directly into the plant in order to assist in its getting established, remove all the blossoms the first year. Also runners will form during the season with small "daughter" plants attached. They will spread throughout the year and fill the bed. During the second season the new runners need to be cut off because they will fill the bed causing you to lose control. The next spring remove all old leaves and stems as this allows for new growth.

Water the plants thoroughly throughout the season. In the late fall, after the first ground freeze, cover the plants with 6" of hay to prevent thaw, freezing and soil heaving issues. All strawberry plants should be replaced every three years.

Next is the Ever bearing plant. The planting instructions and care are the same as above. The only difference in this type of strawberry is that it bears fruit twice per growing season. Harvesting the larger yield in July and a smaller crop in the fall. It is suggested that this type is good for the person who wishes to pick a few for immediate use. It does not produce all at once like the June bearer.

If you incur a problem where the berries turn gray and fuzzy, it is possible that the berries are experiencing gray mold. Remove the contaminated berries from the bed to eliminate further spread. This mold is caused by damp weather and poor air circulation. This occurs mostly during damp years. Applying a fungicide should eliminate the problem.