

BEALS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Vol. XI, No. 3 (Summer 2011)

BHS SPONSORS AN EVENING WITH LOCAL ARTISTS

The general public is invited to attend the June program meeting of Beals Historical Society. Featured will be several painters and photographers who are using the Beals area as their subject matter. Participating artists will have a sampling of their work available for

viewing and purchase and will give an informal talk about their work, with an opportunity for questions. This event will be held on June 17th at the Beals gym beginning at 7PM.

Light refreshments will be served. Donations are much appreciated.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 17, 7PM at BES

Art show featuring local artists and photographers. Light refreshments. Donations much appreciated.

July 2, 1-4 PM at Beals Heritage Center

BHS will be giving tours of its new Heritage Center and Cozy Corner Gift Shop on July 2nd from 1-4PM. Grilled hotdogs, crab rolls and goodies will be sold and for your listening pleasure, George Davis and his many local talented friends will be singing!!!

September 16, 7PM at BES Program Meeting TBA

October 15, 6:30PM at BES Gospel Talent Show

*Please mark your calendars.
We greatly appreciate
your attendance!*

BHS NEEDS YOUR HELP

Please help us reduce the cost of mailing the newsletter by sending your email address to cfDavis44@yahoo.com. Thank you!!!

FUNDING FOR THE HERITAGE CENTER

The Beals Historical Society Executive Board is pleased to announce the grand opening of its Heritage Center. In 2007, efforts began to raise funding to erect a new building to house the archival collections of BHS and a resource center for the general public and students of the Moosabec area. In 2008, work on the building began with \$30,995 received from grants, private donations and fundraising efforts, and continued through 2010. The work progressed according to availability of funds. Never once was money borrowed. By 2010, another \$14,250 was received from grant funding. Major grantors throughout the project include Davis Family Foundation of Falmouth Maine-\$30,000, Eastern

Maine Conservation Initiative (Roque Island people) - \$7,500, Conoco Phillips - \$6,000 and Bangor Savings Bank - \$2,000---plus revenues from talent shows, model boat races and private donations continued to come in. This project has not been built on federal, state or town funding. BHS greatly appreciates all supporters for this wonderful gift. We extend a huge THANK YOU to those of you who have donated revenue, those who have given of their time and talents and those who support our events with their attendance. At present, the Heritage Center will be open by appointment, but soon will have regular hours.

2011 BHS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

More than ever BHS is counting on you to join or renew your membership. The general operating fund depends on your support and with the opening of the new Heritage Center, fuel and electricity costs will increase. Currently

we have 92 renewals, 8 new and 57 lifetime memberships for a total of 170 members. That is 40 more members than announced in the Spring issue. As always, we thank you for your continued support!

Special Thanks

BHS wishes to extend a special thank you to ALL those who contributed to the success of the Heritage Center's grand opening. Together we were able to accomplish our goals and make the grand opening a reality!

SPECIAL NOTICE

BHS is seeking a second copy of *Early Jonesborough Families of Washington County, Maine* by Leonard F. Tibbetts and Darryl B. Lamson.

If you have a copy you would like to sell or contribute, please e-mail cfDavis44@yahoo.com.

BHS MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE AND DEDICATION OF VETERANS MONUMENT PARK & HERITAGE CENTER

On Monday, May 29, 2011, nearly 100 people gathered on the grounds of Beals Historical Society's new facilities for its third annual observance of Memorial Day and the dedication of the Society's new Heritage Center and Veterans Monument Park.

Once again, Daniel Davis, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Beals and local historian for BHS, served as Master of Ceremonies. He began his remarks by reminding those present, "On this special day we remember the many brave men and women who have served this great nation in times of war and in the keeping of the peace; but we especially remember those who have given their lives throughout the history of our country to protect us from harm and to protect the freedoms that we enjoy as American citizens."

Following a prayer of invocation, Mariner Bunker, Vietnam veteran, United States Navy, and Osmond Beal, who served in the United States Army during the time of the Korean Conflict, raised the United States Flag for the first time on the new flagpole erected on the grounds. This was followed by the Presentation of Colors by the United States Coast Guard Unit from the Jonesport station, and the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Davis shared a poem entitled, "Those Honored Dead", in which Marion G. Mahoney expresses some of the reasons why we raise our nation's standard, "Old Glory", with pride on Memorial Day. The audience then joined in singing the patriotic hymn, "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

Following a prayer for the thousands of men and women who have given their lives in the line of duty---and for their surviving families and friends---the poem "Veterans", by the late Clara McKenney of Harrington, Maine, was read as an introduction to the dedication of the Veterans Monument Park. Davis said of this, "In some communities, large and small, the citizens---working through a variety of public

service agencies---have taken this special day [Memorial Day] to a higher level by erecting permanent monuments and other reminders to keep ever before us the great truth that 'Freedom is not free'" [in reference to a phrase engraved on the Park's granite bench].

Davis went on to say, "Such is the case in our own island community. Beals Historical Society has taken upon itself the noble task of establishing this veterans' park in commemoration of all veterans, living and deceased, who have answered their country's call and served in one of the several branches of its military.

"We have come together today to dedicate our new Heritage Center and Veterans Park, with its beautiful granite bench

donated by the Cole Land Transportation Museum, the flag and flagpole, and a bronze plaque and stone in tribute to all veterans, knowing that in the service of their country 'All gave some, and some gave all' that we might enjoy the freedoms we know today as American citizens.

"We trust that, as future generations come to this sacred plot of land on the Heritage Center grounds, they will take time to sit and quietly reflect---as we do today---on all that has been

done on their behalf by brave men and women throughout the history of our nation.

"We, therefore, now dedicate the Beals Heritage Center, to its task as the 'Keeper of our past' and this veterans' park to our veterans, both living and deceased. May God bless all who grace these sacred grounds with their presence."

A round of applause was then extended to all veterans present, followed by a time of recognition for deceased veterans. Following a brief history of our nation's military struggles during its first hundred years, Davis stated, "The Executive Board of Beals Historical Society has

purchased several memorial bricks in remembrance of those

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Daniel Davis, Master Of Ceremonies & United States Coast Guard Unit at the Dedication of Veterans Monument Park



Veterans Mariner Bunker & Osmond Beal raise the United States Flag



Nearly 100 people gathered for the service.



Dedication of the new Heritage Center and Veterans Park.

brave veterans who served this nation during its early years in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War--veterans [of this community] who otherwise might some day be forgotten. Today, we honor and hold in highest remembrance...Manwarren Beal, Jr., William Dobbins, Pvt. Daniel W. Dobbins, Pvt. William Sheridan "Bill" Dobbins, Jr., Pvt. Edward Beal, Jr., Pvt. Robert Anderson, Pvt. William D. Beal, and Asa Beal, III.

After a moment of silence for those veterans aforementioned, Jerry York, music teacher for Beals and Jonesport Schools, played an emotional rendition of trumpet "Taps". The Colors were then retired, and the program concluded with the singing of "America the Beautiful" and a prayer of Benediction by Elder Gary Wilson.

Following the ceremonial program, people were invited to enjoy a variety of refreshments and to tour the Heritage Center where exhibits included Alley's Bay Store Display Case, Tall Barney and His People, Time and Tide Project, Boatbuilding and Fisheries, Sports and Schools, and the Then and Now

Project done by students of Beals Elementary School. In addition, people were invited to view the new Media Center, installed by retired educator Luther M. Beal, the Archive Room, and the Cozy Corner Gift Shop, featuring the work of local artists and artisans.



After the Memorial Services, people were invited to tour the Heritage Center exhibits and enjoy refreshments.

OFFICERS

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HEAD HARBOR SETTLEMENTS OF THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

A HUNDRED-YEAR HISTORY OF SEALAND

Researched and Compiled by Daniel F. Davis

Foreword:

This is the third and final in a series of articles dealing with the history of Sealand. These installments are an attempt to convey significant information from the Head Harbor project, as presented in its public venue. We trust our readers have enjoyed this series and will find it useful for future reference.

Introduction:

In **Part I** of “A Hundred-Year History of Sealand”, we looked at the history of Head Harbor Island beginning with the early 1600’s and following its settlement throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, noting that changing occupations had a profound influence on the population of the island. In **Part II**, we examined the role that the granite industry played in the settlement and longevity of the Sealand settlement, along with other local industries such as fishing and lumbering. In **Part III**, we will examine the influence of the Maine Sea Coast Mission Society on the Sealand community during its closing decades.

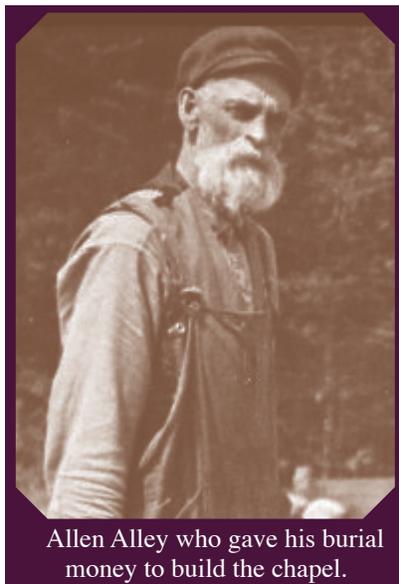
PART III: THE PRESENCE OF THE MAINE SEA COAST MISSION

The Work of the Sea Coast Mission Begins:

An important development in the perpetuation of Sealand came in 1910 with the arrival of the Maine Sea Coast Mission. The society acquired a small plot of land just below the school and there constructed a church, or chapel as it was called, which faithfully served the people of the island for some thirty years.

Sealand Chapel Activities and Ministry:

Maurice Richards, pastor-teacher 1927-1928, describes the church at Sealand, saying that it was “a beautiful building with stained glass windows.” The dedication of the people to this major undertaking is evident in the example of local Sealand resident Allen Alley. Being a conscientious man---and advanced in years---he did not want to leave a burden to others on the event of his passing. He had saved \$50---a considerable sum of money in those days---to cover the cost of his final expenses, but his devotion to the Lord’s work and his interest in seeing the Mission’s efforts to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the island’s residents inspired him to give all that he had saved to the cause. His simple faith allowed him to state with confidence,



Allen Alley who gave his burial money to build the chapel.

“The Lord will take care of me.”

The pastor’s living quarters were constructed on the east side of the church and consisted of a kitchen, dining area, and living room, all in one open area---while the upper floor was the sleeping area. The church could be entered from the living quarters or from the front door, which led directly into the vestibule, and then a door entered from there into the sanctuary. The entire building was heated by a furnace in the basement. During his time of service there, Pastor Richards utilized a portion of the basement as a storage area for a goodly supply of groceries, in case of a severe storm, especially during the winter months.

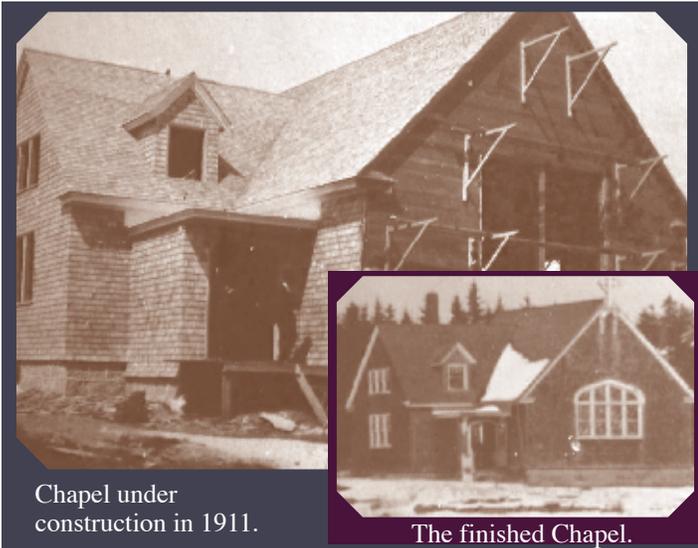
Two regularly scheduled services were held in the Sealand church on Sundays---morning and evening---for a congregation of some thirty to forty parishioners, with a mid-week Bible study and discussion group held in the living quarters. Weather permitting, visitors frequently came by boat from Great Wass, Beals, and Jonesport---and on at least one occasion, according to Gladys Muir (1928-1930), 10 visitors came all the way from Perry---to share in fellowship with the parishioners at Sealand. Mrs. Richards played the reed (pump) organ for the service and accompanied Pastor Richards on his violin.

Richards’ last service in the church, before he and his family left Head Harbor to serve the Mission elsewhere, had for its meditation a fitting text taken from Acts 21:6: “And when we had taken our leave one of the other, we took ship...”

Maurice Richards states that it was the pastor’s responsibility to plan and provide for the social life on the island. Ice cream for the ever-popular ice cream socials was shipped all the way from Bangor. At the church, games were played such as “Chase the Squirrel”; a partner-getting game called “Bingo”; a more physically violent game called “Spin the Cover”; “Winkum”, “Jacob and Rachel”, and a game for grown-ups called “Playing School”. He describes the routine for each in detail in his manuscript entitled, “On Head Harbor Island”. At other times, groups would meet in someone’s home, and with musical instruments in hand, would sing old familiar songs throughout the evening.

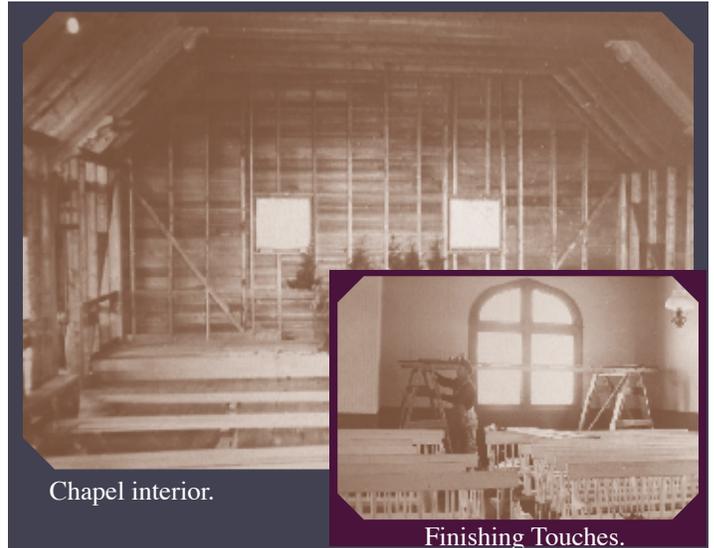
The Mission is credited with keeping the Sealand community alive during the final three decades of its existence. The pastor served as the teacher in the school as well as spiritual leader. (According to Gladys Muir’s journal, a second religious group

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Chapel under construction in 1911.

The finished Chapel.



Chapel interior.

Finishing Touches.

may have established a ministry on the island, as well. She states that she had heard from the locals that, at one time, there had been a branch of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at Sealand, built after the Sea Coast Mission arrived, but which may have dissolved before the 1930's. There is no mention as to where this group may have met.)

The Mission Begins Sealand Postal Service:

Along with its many other endeavors to benefit the people of Head Harbor, the Mission was responsible for the

introduction of postal service on the island in 1914. Thus, when the local postmistress (Hattie Hoffses likely served as postmistress at Sealand for a period of time) and her husband moved away from the island, it seemed logical to relocate the letterboxes in the vestibule of the church. It was at this time that "Sealand, Maine" became the accepted postal name of the settlement commonly known as Hatchet Harbor. Maurice Richards writes that he and his wife, Othelia, were appointed to run the post office---along with their other responsibilities to the church, school, and community in general.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS - JOURNAL ENTRIES:

The Sea Coast Mission has preserved the journals of their preacher-teachers from the end of 1926 to early 1931. A reading of these journals offers both sobering and amusing insights into the life of the people at Sealand, some of which have been included in portions of this presentation; others are offered as follows:

From the Journal of D. R. Hickland, Pastor-Teacher Dec. 1926-June 1927:

From Hickland's journal, we find that some of the men of the island engaged in trapping to help supplement their incomes. This seems to be where you would find a little action on the island. Hickland writes that in December of 1926, he and Elmer Hoffses were using Pearl Hoffses' boat to tend their strings of mink traps. (Gladys Muir adds that there was sometimes "quite a little fussing and fist-fights over mink-trapping" among the menfolk, but "nothing very serious." "The rivalry was mainly territorial--between trappers at Crow Point and at Hatchet Harbor", she explains.)

We also find that family planning was not evident

at Sealand during its hundred-year existence. Although houses tended to be extremely small, the number of individuals living in them could be rather large, often ranging from 7-11 members or more. D. R. Hickland indicates Herb Alley had nine children as of 1926, and his wife was expecting another. Hickland says the stork seems to make an "annual visit" to the Alleys. (And of course, there was no doctor

present for these deliveries.)

From the Journal of Maurice Richards, Pastor-Teacher Sept. 1927-May 1928:

Maurice Richards indicates that opportunities were made available to the youth on the island for meaningful activities, stating that a Boy Scout troop of 9 was organized at Sealand in September of 1927. Not every small community, even today, provides such a wholesome organization for its youth

On a more serious, yet humorous note, Mr. Richards also writes in that same month that school was closed for several days due to a "tramp scare" on the island. It seems that the man was "lying in ambush" and causing quite a stir



Vacation Bible School

Continued On Next Page

among the children and adults, as well.

From the Journal of Gladys Muir, Pastor-Teacher Sept. 1928-June 1930:

Gladys Muir includes in her journal a good picture of the opportunities the Mission provided the people of the island for fellowship, entertainment, and meaningful interaction. Among the activities organized and promoted by the Mission were church suppers, ice cream socials and game nights, and gathering at the parsonage to listen to the radio---the first on the island. (Mrs. Muir indicated she liked to spend a quiet evening enjoying the radio, “soft, ripply, dreamy things in the music.” Her island friends, however, requested music that was “loud and fast”, as they termed it. Mrs. Muir records in June of 1930 the arrival of the Mission vessel, *Sunbeam*, with members of the Black Harlem Boys’ Band (60 people came out for the evening’s entertainment). People also made a practice of “visiting around”, some going across the island, or even over to a nearby island, such as Seguin where Frank and Oscar Wallace camped.

Gladys Muir’s journal also contains interesting historical facts that come in handy to the occasional researcher of local history. She indicates that Herb Alley, at one point on March 12, 1929, was engaged in tearing down the “old boarding house”, also known as the “Federal Building”, according to Maurice Richards. She indicates that the boards were used to build a structure on a site near the church. The boarding house had been used to house men and their families during the quarrying days.

Mrs. Muir was a very observant person, and sometimes offers interesting points to ponder. For example, once she visited one of the two cemeteries on the island and made a curious observation: Only Rev. Turner’s headstone faced east---all the others faced west. She speculated as to its significance, but never came to a definite conclusion. We are left to wonder, could it have had religious implications, perhaps a future resurrection with Christ appearing in



Unidentified Woman, Child, and Dog
on Chapel Steps

the East? Did it signify a membership in some social organization that buried its dead with the headstone facing east? We may never know the answer to the question that perplexed Mrs. Muir, but I would like to visit the site to see for myself. As to which cemetery she was referring---whether at Graveyard Point on the northwest side of the island, or the smaller one above the Wallace Cove---we cannot be sure.

-Mrs. Muir wrote an entry on March 19 of 1929, saying that she had written a letter for Mrs. Chambers ordering a sewing machine “on time payment”. She goes on with a humorous note, saying that Mrs. Chambers was also planning to send to Sears Roebuck for an “electric light” to be placed over her back door. Mrs. Muir suggested she wait a while, since Sealand had no electricity, of course. Another humorous entry follows on April 5th. It reads, “Aunt Margie’s [Alley] trouble”: It seems Aunt Margie had sent to Sears for ‘green jazz garters trimmed with roses and streamers [costing] 39 cents’, then discovered they didn’t show when she was walking or sitting. She had been wearing them halfway between the knee and her boot-tops. Mrs. Muir suggested shortening the dress, in order to make them more visible, to which Aunt Margie replied, “My Lord! Siah [Josiah] would kill me if I done that.”

Mrs. Muir got to witness first-hand her

parishioners’ day-to-day lives---along with their many trials and tribulations, as well as the moments of excitement when something special made its appearance in their often-mundane existence. Such was the case as she recounts a visit with Otis and his family in March of 1929 and shared their excitement to show-off their new cabinet Phonograph, which he had recently purchased---major advancement in technology for a member of the remote Sealand community so early in the 20th century.

Muir sadly records on October 2 of 1929, “Everyone astir today about the shooting of Sherman Merchant.” It seems that Merchant had lived previously on the island, as the census records indicate, but the shooting occurred in a dispute with a lobster fisherman in the Little Kennebec area of Roque Bluffs; there was some question whether the shot was fired intentionally or accidentally. Sherman Merchant died the next day.

From the Journal of Ethel L. Corbet, Pastor-Teacher Sept. 1930-Feb. 1931:

Ethel Corbet writes of one of the simple things that brought excitement into the lives of the people of the Sealand community. She records in her journal on October 4, 1930, “There is great excitement here because there is a moose on the island. They are all scat of it.”

Corbet also could have served as the social correspondent for the local paper. She writes on November 23, 1929, “Edith Hoffses eloped with Fred Sawyer last night. Her mother, Hattie Hoffses went up to make sure if they were really married.”

The Final Days of Sealand:

By the end of World War II, Head Harbor Island had been vacated by all of its year-round residents, but seasonal use persists to this day.

Although the changes heretofore identified most certainly contributed to the eventual demise of the Head Harbor community, perhaps it was the rigors of island life itself that proved

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too difficult for the preservation of a year-round community. After all, there were winter cold spells that lasted for weeks on end, freezing boats at their moorings and making trips to the mainland for supplies an impossibility--except if one dared attempt a crossing over saltwater ice with a skiff towed behind. Maurice Richards recalls that during one exceptionally cold winter, the waters of Moosabec Reach froze all the way from the Jonesport shore to Head Harbor Island, making it possible for men to carry supplies and the mail to Sealand over solid ice---never touching open water.

The fact of the matter is island life was a hard life. The island farms required constant upkeep and regular financial investment. In time, they became overgrown and run down due to constant use and much neglect. In desperation, the livestock had been removed to the mainland--except the sheep, which could survive off the land without a great deal of care and were a source of much-needed wool for homemade clothing. Without capital investment in the island's granite industry, the quarries stood idle. Even the once productive lath mill that stood on the shores of the Cow Yard had closed in 1928. The St. Regis loggers had stripped the island of its dense, virgin forest and would not return to the island until several decades would have passed. By then, the ownership of most of the land would be off-limits, having been transferred into the hands of nonresidents from "away" with a greater interest in conservation than in commercialization of its abundant resources.

Fishing, lobstering, clamming, and other water-related industries did not owe their existence to the Head Harbor locale; they could be carried out as easily---and perhaps more conveniently--in Jonesport and Beals, rather than Hatchet Harbor. Thus, the exodus began in earnest as the 30's were drawing to a close.

Household by household, the residents--with their limited belongings--moved to Beals and Jonesport; some taking

even their homes with them, rather than leaving them to the vandals and nature's harsh elements that would eventually bring them to the ground. Other structures were sold, with the new owners left with the responsibility of relocating them to Beals and Jonesport--using scows. Some buildings were torn down---the materials used to reconstruct them elsewhere or to build new homes, outbuildings, and barns in more promising locations off island.

In 1937, the little post office at Hatchet Harbor closed; the school followed soon thereafter. In 1940, the Sea Coast Mission held its final service in the church, with 29 of the 30 residents still on the island in attendance. (The thirtieth was ill and could not attend.) The Mission contracted with a Jonesboro carpenter to raze the church, leaving the pews, bell, and stained glass window to be removed by the Mission's boat to Frenchboro, where they are still in service, according to the late Reverend Neal Bousfield. The lumber and other building materials that once graced this beautiful structure were transported to Jonesport and used to erect the home of the late Arnold Beal, a home that is still in use today. Sad to say, only a few houses remained on Head Harbor Island after World War II, some of which have been lost to nature, while others have been maintained as hunting and seasonal camps and cottages.

Back to Nature:

A visit to Head Harbor today finds that the original settlers have resumed their dominion over almost the entire island. Beavers have built dams that back up water flowing from streams into what used to be little hamlets and isolated homesteads. The once-heavily traveled dirt byways---used by children of Alleys, Beals, Merchants, and Woodwards to make their way to the little, one-room island school---are obliterated by new growth of trees and scrub. Marshes created behind the beaver dams and along the edge of the heaths are home to blue heron, osprey, wild ducks, mink, and other creatures great and small. Deer and moose wander freely where once stood homes, the church, school,

and places of business. All we have to remind us of that distant time and place are lonely gravestones standing vigil over forgotten graves, a time long past when people like us made their presence known, fragments of history inscribed by aged hands on yellowed pages, a few old photos, and the reminiscent lines left by those who were a part of that experience. All these things taken together have helped us glimpse---albeit briefly---this fleeting moment of history, frozen in time.

Today, there may be no one left alive who was born on Head Harbor, or who lived in the little Sealand settlement. With the passing of the generations, the story of Sealand has all but disappeared from the annals of local history. Few people visit the island today, except for hunters who make their way along any overgrown footpaths that still exist.

A few years ago, however, in the spring of 1999, Bernard Brown, a Social Studies teacher at Jonesport-Beals High School, took his eleventh-grade class to Head Harbor Island on a field trip. They visited many of the sites we have mentioned this evening, including Graveyard Point, Crow Point, the Cow Yard, the old quarry, and the site of Sealand itself at Hatchet Harbor. Near the place where the island's church once stood, a memorial service was held which included readings from the diary of Gladys Muir. A history of the closing days of life at Sealand was read and a flag salute was made by the students. We trust a lasting impression was made on the young minds of those present, and that the legacy of the Head Harbor settlements will never be forgotten.

We trust that the information presented in this series of articles prepared for the *BHS Newsletter* has helped enlighten you to the hundred-year history of the Head Harbor Community, and has helped preserve the memory of a special place in time called Sealand, Maine.

The Sealand exhibit may be viewed at Beals Heritage Center by appointment or during scheduled hours.

THE END

