

# BEALS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Vol. XX, No. 2 (Spring 2020)

## BHS ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING AND BEALS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO PRESENT “MAINE’S HISTORIC TRIBES”

BHS Annual Business meeting will be held at Beals Elementary School, March 20th at 6PM.

At 6:30, BES 7th and 8th grade students will present their projects regarding Maine’s historic tribes. Students chose a tribe to research and have written a

report. They also created a visual piece for the presentation.

We would like to invite you to join us in learning more about this great piece of Maine History. Light refreshments will be served. Donations only.

Save  
THE  
Date

## 2020 CALENDAR OF EVENTS—TENTATIVE DATES

### MARCH 20

Annual Business Meeting, 6PM  
BES “Maine’s Historic Tribes”  
program at 6:30PM

### MAY 25

Memorial Day Program, 10AM

### JUNE 19

Program to be announced

### JULY 4

Selling lobster & crabmeat rolls  
across from USCG

### AUGUST 21

Program to be announced

### SEPTEMBER 18

Program to be announced

*Please mark your calendars as we  
greatly appreciate your support!*

## New Beals Heritage Center Hours

BHS Executive Board is very excited to announce regular open hours Monday through Thursday, from 10AM to 4PM, throughout the year!

## 2020 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Dear Supporters of Beals Historical Society,

Please note that all annual memberships in BHS regularly expire on the last day of the calendar year, with application for membership renewal due in January. That means that many of you may not yet be active members for 2020. We want you to know how much we have appreciated your association with the society in the past and invite you to renew your membership for the current year, if you have not already done so.

As a member of BHS, you’ll receive regular newsletters with articles of special interest, notices of upcoming events, as well as periodic reports on the progress we’re making in reaching our short and long-range goals. In addition, your membership dues, which are the

main basis for BHS operating budget, will help with the financial support of this worthwhile organization, as archiving is an expensive endeavor.

To date, we have processed 38 renewals and 2 new membership applications, which is down considerably from previous years. Additionally, BHS currently has 65 life members. To date, we have a total of 105 members. We would like to see substantial growth in our membership in the coming months by reaching a goal of 200 members and with your help we can make this happen.

If you would like to renew your membership or become a new member, you may do so by completing the attached application. We would very much appreciate your support! Thank you!

## THANK YOU

BHS Executive Board consists of seven individuals who volunteer their time to this most worthy cause. I would like to take the opportunity to thank them for remaining, on the board, for yet another two years. Your dedication is very much appreciated!

## SIX RUM RUNNERS OF THE PROHIBITION ERA

*Submitted by Ruth Lowell, wife of one of Will Frost's great grandsons.*

"Nothing else looked like them and nothing else sounded like them," John Durward wrote of rum runners built by Will Frost and his son Bert. ("The Portland Rum Runners", Portland magazine, 1984)

"They were brutal things," recalled boatbuilder Harold Gower, who helped build them.

Frost Boat Shop is known to have constructed six large rum runners, and countless of Frost's smaller boats were also used for that illicit 1920s activity. For example, in fall 1925, a man from Rockland with New Jersey connections bought "every lobster boat he could find in sight," said Bert Frost. "He took away 16 at one time." The Frosts spent the winter building new boats for the fishermen.

In 1928, Will Frost moved his shop from Beals Island to Jonesport, making it easier to get wood and other supplies. In Jonesport, he put Bert, age 19, in charge of building the "outdoor boats".

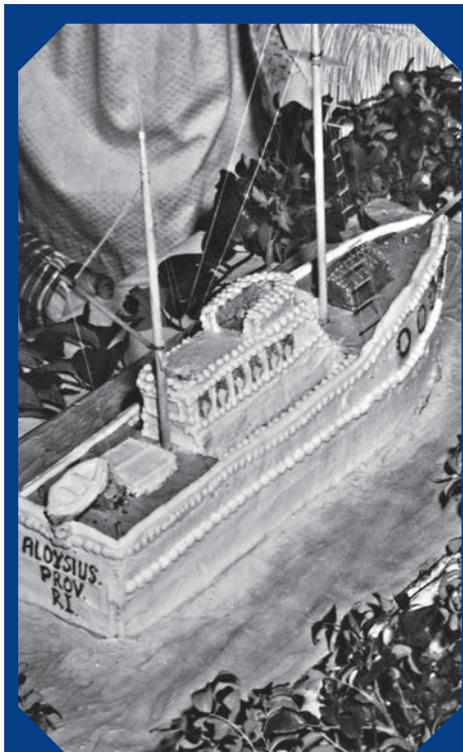
In a Maine Sunday Telegram article, Harold Gower described, "We built rum luggers, too, 75 and 80 footers. They often had two Sterling engines of 300 hp each. Those boats were pretty fast, about 22 knots, and that's on a trial run here in the reach.

"We built I think six rum luggers. One had two 500 hp Liberty airplane engines in her... She'd go about 35 mph. Boy, she was fast! We built her here on the island...

"They were owned by different parties, from Massachusetts and all along the coast.

"I don't know what Pappy Frost charged for those boats. He built the model for them, everything. They had a reverse curve in them too. They were built light, inch and a quarter planking, just as light as could be. Of course, they were strong. They had to be to stand the weight and the speed." (Lynn Franklin, Maine Sunday Telegram, May 14, 1972)

Merton Hall, another Frost shipyard



*50th Wedding Anniversary Cake.  
Photos courtesy of Jane Slater.*

worker, gave five names of large rum runners built outdoors at Jonesport: Evelyn Ruth, Good Luck, Lassgehn, Aloysius, and Grey Ghost. He said that one other, Black Duck, was built at Frost's Beals Island shop.

In later years, all of these boats spent time in the public eye. The following are

stories of their exploits:

ALOYSIUS: I heard that the boat's name was given as a joke, using the middle name of original owner Thomas Murray of New York. An article titled "Maine Craft on the Rocks" reported that the 60-foot vessel, launched December 17, 1929, ran aground in Narragansett Bay en route from

Jonesport to New York City. (Biddeford Daily Journal, December 30, 1929) She apparently wasn't carrying any liquor at the time.

The second and final owner, Herb Slater of Martha's Vineyard, also bought her for transporting booze and hired a captain to run her. A Coast Guard record indicates that she was once caught off East and West Chop Lights, Martha's Vineyard (date unknown). She was powered by two Sterling Dolphin 300 hp engines, according to nautical historian Russell Cleary.

After Prohibition, Aloysius became a family boat out of Menemsha, swordfishing from 1936 until 1974. She was so beloved by the Slaters that Herb Jr. and his wife Jane had a wedding cake in the shape of the boat. "The cake was made by a summer friend in the shape of the sword fishing yacht, Aloysius, and was the hit of the party! It was complete with string rigging and more," Jane

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*Aloysius, Sword fishing. Photos courtesy of Jane Slater.*

Slater reminisced after her husband's death. At their 50th wedding anniversary party, Herb and Jane served a replica of the Aloysius cake.

BLACK DUCK: The Aloysius wasn't the only boat having problems on December 30, 1929. At a foggy 3 am, the infamous Black Duck shooting had occurred, killing three men at the entrance to Narragansett Bay and shooting off the fourth man's thumb. It is still disputed whether the boat swerved unexpectedly as the Coast Guard fired, or created large waves when accelerating away, or whether the Coast Guard deliberately aimed for the pilot house. Public outrage over the case is said to have helped bring an end to Prohibition.

Records show that prior to 1928 the Black Duck, also known as C5677, was originally owned in Gloucester, Mass. In July 1925 she was captured at Oaks Bluffs, Martha's Vineyard. The Coast Guard report said the rum runners were using carrier pigeons.

She was 50 feet long and had two airplane engines, according to news reports in 1929. The article stated that she was capable of 30 kts. (New Bedford Evening Standard, December 30, 1929)

The Coast Guard kept the boat, using her to chase rum runners. Her Coast Guard number was CG-808, or perhaps also CG-134.

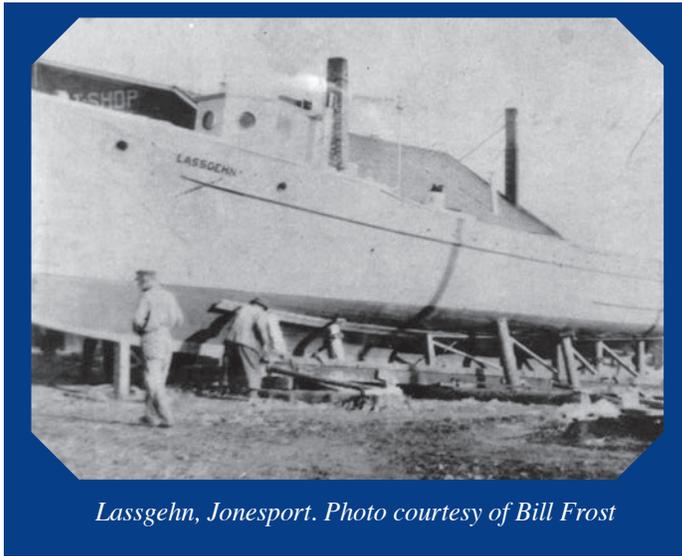
I haven't found many sources directly linking the Black Duck to Will Frost, but there are a few clues. Hall mentions her by name, and Gower also mentions a rum runner built on Beals Island and thus prior to 1928. We think she might have been named after Black Duck Cove on Great Wass (which incidentally was close to

the old Coast Guard station on Crumple Island.) Bert Frost often reused names from his father's boats, and his last lobster boat was named the Black Duck, going to owners in Chatham, Mass. I

"An exciting motorboat dash, faster than anything yet seen in the regattas, took place in the inner harbor Thursday afternoon and attracted the attention of a number along the waterfront. The

participants were the Good Luck, acknowledged to be one of the fastest craft along the eastern seaboard, and the well-known Black Duck, which has been converted from a rumrunner to a Coast Guard patrol boat.

"..the Good Luck passed Long wharf at a speed estimated in the vicinity of 40 miles an hour, heading for its berth in the lower end of the harbor...by the time [the Coast Guard] were near the suspected craft, the Good Luck had been moored and the crew were on their way home. The Black Duck, incidentally, is now

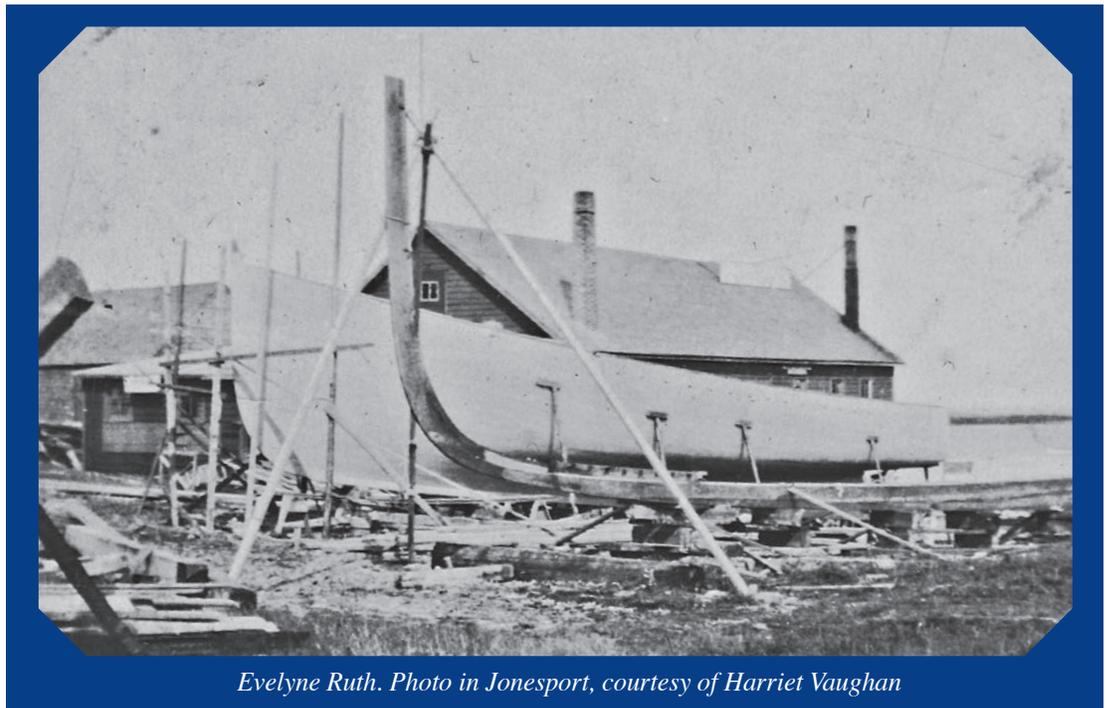


*Lassgehn, Jonesport. Photo courtesy of Bill Frost*

continue to follow leads trying to verify who built the Black Duck rum runner.

known as CG-808." As in Nova Scotia and in Jonesport/Beals, Frost boats were once again

GOOD LUCK: The boat name "Good



*Evelyne Ruth. Photo in Jonesport, courtesy of Harriet Vaughan*

Luck" was not uncommon in this era, so the information I found may or may not be for the boat built by Frost.

A 1930 appearance is cited in the book Rumrunners by J. Anne Funderburg. From an April 11, 1930 article in the Newport Mercury and Weekly News:

racing each other. To this we can only say, "Good Luck, Black Duck" (groan)

EVELYNE RUTH: The Evelyn Ruth appears in Boston at 4 am on March 30, 1930. According to the New York Times, she unloaded at the wrong dock

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(800 gallons of rye whiskey) and was stranded by a receding tide.

The crew were taken to the station house, where the captain paid \$200 bail, “caught a taxi outside the station and beat the customs men to the wharf by two minutes. The incoming tide had floated the speedboat, and [the customs men] arrived in time to hear the boat roaring down the bay...”

She reappeared in Provincetown later that afternoon, when the Coast Guard

warfare were employed today in a spectacular clash at Boston between coastguards and rum-runners off Gloucester. One rumrunner was fatally shot and one guardsman collapsed under poison gas,” reported an article that ran in an Australian newspaper with the subheadlines “Scientific Warfare” “Smoke Screen: Poison Gas” and “New Terror for Coastguards”. (The Argus, Melbourne, Australia, September 7, 1931)

Me. Part of the memoir was published in Downeast magazine, February 1984.

Grey Ghost had been operating off Massachusetts but was moved to Maine, working out of Portland and then Rockland, skippered by a Captain Jack (not his real name). When winter came, the offshore liquor supply ships left the area, so the Grey Ghost started fetching Johnnie Walker themselves from Yarmouth, NS. Their first crossing was quite rough, and “looking like a floating iceberg,” they pulled into Matinicus Harbor three days before Christmas on their way back home.

The next day, a Coast Guard ice breaker moored in the harbor. The captain and two seamen rowed ashore, tying their dinghy to the stern of the Grey Ghost. Captain Jack claimed to be from Boston, going to Nova Scotia for lobsters. They chatted a little, and as he was leaving, the Coast Guard captain said, “Good luck with your lobsters. Probably more money in rum” and laughed.

The ice breaker left, but the Grey Ghost stayed over Christmas. A town gathering at the schoolhouse provided entertainment, with “gallons of lobster stew followed by baked stuffed haddock.” Cakes and pies, a Christmas tree, roaring fire, and music filled the evening. When it came time for presents, Captain Jack gave the islanders six cases of Johnnie Walker Black Label, as a thanks for not telling the Coast Guard that they were rumrunners.

Bill Foster’s memoir includes some other great stories. I haven’t found out whether he ever got it published. After Prohibition, Captain Jack and his wife took the boat to Alaska for salmon fishing.



*Grey Ghost. Photo Appeared in Downeast magazine, June 1972*

caught up with her and the crew fled. “Evelyne Ruth... finally was recaptured ninety miles away in Provincetown Harbor after every available Coast Guard boat from Portland, Me. to Long Island Sound had been ordered to catch her.”

The article describes her as a 55-foot speedboat long sought by the Coast Guard. (New York Times, March 31, 1930)

LASSGEHN: “Lassgehn” is a German expression meaning “Let’s go”. Tragedy struck this 60-footer in early September 1931 after a 20 minute chase zig-zagging back and forth near the Gloucester breakwater.

“Many scientific devices of modern

Lassgehn hove to after Coast Guard fire felled the New Bedford father of five. Upon impending capture, the rum runners set fire to the boat in an attempt to destroy evidence, but the Coast Guard extinguished the flames and towed the disabled vessel to the Coast Guard station.

One news article claimed that only one quart of liquor was found aboard, but the New York Times reported a hold and deck full of liquor, about 400 cases. (September 6, 1931)

GREY GHOST Grey Ghost is another boat name frequently used during Prohibition. However, Will Frost’s Grey Ghost is lovingly chronicled in a memoir by William Foster of Mexico,

Prohibition-era newspapers notoriously exaggerated the dramatic exploits of the swashbuckling, derring-do rum runners and their speedy, sneaky boats. In addition, captured rum runners usually gave false names and addresses, so we can probably take these stories with a good splash of salt. And as with many nautical tales, they are as salty as the sea that witnessed them all.

## PERSONALIZED BRICKS

It's time to purchase personalized bricks for either the Veteran's Monument Park or the Patio. For the 4"x 8" brick, you have three lines each with 21 letters and spaces for \$75. The 8"x8" brick offers four lines with 21 letters and spaces for \$125. The Veteran's brick

information includes the rank, name, branch of service, war and years served. You can be creative with the Patio brick. It can be your favorite Beals Island memory, memorialize your loved ones, honor the living, a school memory. It's your choice with the patio brick.

These bricks will be set in time for the Memorial Day program. Orders must be received by April 13, 2020. Thank you!  
(Laura, please include membership and brick applications. Thank you!)



# BEALS HERITAGE CENTER BEALS HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please check one:  Renewal  New Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) as you wish it to appear on membership card and member roll on website:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please type or print clearly)

Your mailing address:

Street or Post Office Box: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP

(Please review all types and check the one that applies)

- |  |                        |   |
|--|------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Annual       | \$10 Annually          | <i>Annual memberships are for the calendar year and expire December 31st.</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Life         | \$200 one-time payment |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couple Annual           | \$15 Annually          |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couple/Life             | \$300 one-time payment |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior/65 Annual        | \$5 annually           |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior couple/65 Annual | \$7.50 annually        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student                 | \$5 annually           |   |

Over and above dues, I wish to donate

\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ operating expenses, \_\_\_\_\_ building fund, or \_\_\_\_\_ endowment fund.

Receipt and membership card will be sent to you.

**Instructions:** Please print, complete and mail this application, together with tax-deductible check or money order payable to Beals Historical Society to:

Membership Chairperson,  
Beals Historical Society,  
P.O. Box 280, Beals, ME 04611