

BEALS HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



GUEST SPEAKER ANNOUNCED

Entrepreneur Terry Bell of Edmunds, Maine will be guest speaker at the March Beals Historical Society's program meeting. Terry will begin his presentation with a look back to the year 1765 when the first generation of Bells arrived in Edmunds to establish the Tide Mill Farm on Cobscook Bay. The tidewater gristmill harnessed the power to grind Bell's grain into the invaluable flour required for the survival of many local families. We invite you to join us as we learn about how the Mill's production played into post-Revolutionary War history, explore the past and learn about the present day farm and what it has to offer to Downeast Maine. Several generations

later, the Tide Mill Farm is still a working, organic farm, which is still owned and operated by the Bell family. Samples of their products will be offered to those in attendance.

The program meeting, free to the public, will be held at Beals Elementary School on Thursday, March 14, 2013 at 6:30PM. It would be nice to have at least twenty-five people in attendance for the program since the Bell family will be traveling from Edmunds so we do hope you will join us for this most interesting evening! Prior to the program, will be BHS annual business meeting at 6PM. Light refreshments will be served.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 14, 6:00PM

Annual Business Meeting &
History of Tide Mill Farm Program

May 4, 6:30PM

Talent/Variety Show

June 21, 6:30PM

TBA

September 20, 6:30PM

TBA

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

BHS TALENT/VARIETY SHOW

This year's talent/variety show will be held at the Beals gym on Saturday, May 4th. It is one of BHS's largest fundraisers, but over the past couple of years, funds have dropped. The show is a great way to spend time with family and friends, while enjoying an evening filled with local

talented singing artists, along with Poison Pam's humorous adventures! Who could ask for more??? We do hope you will mark your calendars and join us as we provide great, affordable entertainment outside of your comfort zone!

"THE OLD HOUSE THAT WE CALLED HOME"

by Daniel F. Davis

The following is adapted from a Facebook post from August 20, 2012:

It is my understanding that my parents' house, as shown in the photo, was a part of the Sealand settlement at Head Harbor Island that lasted for more than a hundred years, beginning in the 1820's and ending around 1940. The house may be recognizable in some of the old photographs in that settlement at Hatchet Harbor, situated on the western shore of the island, just to the north of the Sealand church.

It is hard to determine the actual age of the old house, since it was built from the remains of a barn that stood for many years on Head Harbor Island, but it was said to be over a hundred years old during my childhood years in the 1950's. Besides remnants of an old barn, the house was constructed of rough wood and what appeared to be

building materials salvaged from driftwood found along Head Harbor's rugged shores. The interior walls were sheathed with laths, no doubt milled at Head Harbor during Sealand's period of prosperity, with the lower portion of the kitchen walls wainscoted and the upper walls covered with oil cloth. The ceilings were narrow, matched wooden strips, painted the traditional pea-green of that day---perhaps chosen for its ability to hide the soot that escaped the black iron stove that required frequent feeding.

The hand-hewn corner posts were extra large in girth and irregular in shape, giving the structure a hidden strength that eluded its wary inhabitants, who were convinced that one day it would blow down in one of the many strong winds that frequent this region of the Maine coast during fall and winter. To attest to its hidden strength, when the old

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2013 SCENIC BEALS ISLAND AREA CALENDARS

BHS is currently selling calendars comprised of beautiful Beals area photographs from local photographers. The calendar is dated from April 2013 to March 2014 and costs \$20 including tax but need to include \$2 each for shipping. To place an order, please send payment to: Beals Historical Society, PO Box 280, Beals ME 04611. The calendars will also be available at the program meeting on March 14th.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

The membership chairperson's report for 2013 shows 79 annual membership renewals, three new memberships and 61 life members for a grand total of 143 members. We would like to reach 200 members for 2013 so would much appreciate it if you would check your membership card to see if it has been renewed this year! Thank you for your continued support!

house was being torn down by Eugene Emerson's heavy skidder (used for logging operations), the operator, Phillip Dobbins of Addison, pushed on one corner and the whole house moved intact, sliding several feet across the ground without noticeable damage--certainly a surprise to my mother, Velma (Smith) Davis, who was certain "the old barn" was ready to fall down in the next big wind! It is not surprising that she felt this way, since the house was known to shake and creak like an old ship when the storms blew in from the sea.

As with many other island dwellings throughout the Moosabec area, the house was moved from Head Harbor to the Backfield (down below the Frank Alley/Harvey Alley homestead), where Kenneth and Ina Beal lived when they were first married. It was moved from there to the Indian Beach and sat across the road from where the town landing is today. The method and path of this move is not certain, but it is safe to speculate that it was moved on skids across the frozen heath or by scow around Alley's Point to its destination at the Indian Beach. From its location near the beach, it was eventually moved by scow to Pig Island Gut, with the intentions of moving it over the steep rocks with pulleys to its new location on Alley's Point, on a full-run tide. This move was not uneventful, however, as I believe it was there that the house was lost off the scow and remained in the water for days, until it could be successfully moved to its final resting place. (I have heard that the family cat was on the upstairs windowsill at the time it was lost overboard, and was content to remain there throughout the entire ordeal.)

Now located on Alley's Point, the house became the home of one of Grampie Andrew Alley's sons, Leeman Alley and his wife Rhoda. Leeman and his brother, Leon, both had homes at one time, located on the Point near their family homestead at the end of what is now Alley's Bay Road. When Uncle Leeman moved to the Head of the Island, my Grandmother Elnora and step-grandfather Clarence Alley lived in the Head Harbor house for a time, shortly after they were first married. Later, they moved back to Grampie Andrew's house on the Point to help care for Grammie Rosie and Grampie Andrew in their old age and my father, Ralph Davis, Sr., and my mother took residence in the house, where they lived the rest of their lives and raised their family.

The old house that we called home was torn down the year following my father's death in 1983. "It was the coldest house ever built. Nothing but a barn!" my mother would say, a statement most certainly intended as figurative, but in fact (to quote the late Rev. George DeLong, long-time pastor at Beals Wesleyan Church) was "more truth than poetry." Despite all the work Daddy did to improve it, the wind blew right through the "old barn". Before he initiated those repairs, the floor did not even meet the sidewalls, leaving a gap all around the kitchen, through which the wind breathed and blew in accordance with outside weather conditions. Oddly, it was as if the Sealand carpenter(s) that built it had put the floor in after the house was completed. When the wind gusted at its strongest, during those all-too-common no'the-east snowstorms, the linoleum carpet that covered the original floor boarding would be lifted off the floor until the gust subsided. We put my father's old navy blankets and other bedding over the doors and windows to help keep the wind out, holding them in place with casing knives and clothespins. We had to dress up in winter clothes to go to bed on cold nights, complete with mittens, knitted socks and hats, and a heavy coat. My brother and I would quickly duck beneath the quilts and coats piled on top of the bed, breathing as hard and fast as we could to warm the air space

under the bedding, a process which usually resulted in a layer of frost forming on the top edge of the bedding before morning! One cold night, the goldfish froze in the bowl, despite my father's best efforts to extract all the heat he could out of the kitchen stove. Fortunately, the goldfish, which adapt well to both tropical and arctic settings, survived once we had thawed them in the oven the next morning.



The water buckets on the cupboard showed a healthy skim of ice on countless occasions, as did the "thunder jug" and chamber pots, which stood no chance at all in the frigid Arctic of the upstairs. We ate our meals off the kitchen stove, since it was too cold to eat at the table adjacent to it. One night my father decided we should move the beds downstairs in order to keep warm. We moved my parents' bed next to the kitchen stove and our bed in the small living room off the kitchen. It was so drafty and cold at the "lower elevations" that Daddy moved their bed back upstairs before the night was over! He announced to us boys that they might as well freeze to death upstairs as down! My brother and I could feel the wind blowing across our faces, as well as under the covers, all night long, but we stuck it out until the "cold snap" of several days had passed.

To say it was a COLD house is an understatement, to be sure. It amazes me that we ever survived those years when winters were longer and colder than they are today and we had so little to help us get by, but somehow we made it though those hard years and today we truly appreciate a warm house, indoor plumbing, and enough food to eat. We were poor in those days--really poor-- as was almost everyone else we knew. We were poor, but we didn't even know it and didn't mind it at all.

I'm sure our parents felt a great burden of concern for our situation, but if they did, they didn't show it. When there was no food to put on the table, my father gathered mussels from the ice-covered rocks for us to eat--and we thought we had been given food fit for the gods! When we didn't have enough to eat, my parents let us eat first, saying they would eat later. We didn't know they refrained from eating because there wasn't enough for all of us, so we ate without conscience until we were full. And when things were at their worst, my mother silently prayed that something would be provided for us to eat for dinner. On one such day, Grampie Clarence came to the door right on cue, with a jar of home-canned (jarred) chicken and said he thought we might be able to use it. I heard my mother say a quiet, "Thank you, Lord. I wasn't sure what I was going to put on the table, but I knew you would provide." I think it safe to say that none of us realizes the sacrifices our parents made for our benefit throughout our childhood years. It's as if they took a vow of silence, when they accepted the responsibilities of parenthood, to just let enjoy being kids and to provide for us the best they could, no matter the adversity they faced. And yes---I have tears in my eyes as I write this.

BRICK ORDER DEADLINE

Since this will be the last newsletter before placing the brick order the first week in April, we wish to remind you to please submit your order this month to ensure your brick will be set in place by Memorial Day.

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