

Westport Island History Committee

June 18, 2019

Present: Jeff Tarbox, Dennis Dunbar, Paul Bonyun, Dedee Greenleaf Hodgdon, and Mary Ellen Barnes

The meeting convened at 6:30 pm at the Town Hall. The minutes of the May 21 meeting were approved. (Excuse the variations in detail in these minutes. Not up to Gaye-standards for sure.)

**Wright House:** Jeff summarized where we are with the Wright House. At last month's meeting, the Committee voted to explore the use of the house for historical display purposes. Richard DeVries and the Wright House Committee have a list of tasks that will help get the interior into decent shape, such as removing the carpet, fixing a window frame and door, etc. Anne Fairfield has been contacted to see if there's interest by island crafters in using the space. It's likely the rooms on the main floor would make a decent community gathering space for different purposes; whether the space could become a store for local products – that's still an open question.

Paul likes the overall direction and feels we'll need people (aka volunteers) – our own and other committees – to open and staff the house.

Jeff moved on to talking about what the History Committee needs to do, to get display materials and furniture, etc. ready. Perhaps the Wright House can be opened when the Community Church is also open for visits.

We shared a few topics and/or materials that could be fairly easily exhibited:

- A Maine Historical Society November exhibit that Gaye will be contributing to, on behalf of the Town's collection on the Maine Memory Network
- Copies of the Sarah Tarbox letters
- Copies of the Tibbetts letters
- Photos of the ferry, causeway, and bridges
- Copies of Joseph Leighton postcards
- Photos of the steamboat at the landings (Dedee knows the owners of these)
- Dennis's mill write-ups
- The historic house tour maps and displays
- Baseball uniforms

**Open House:** Separate from the Wright House display possibilities, we want to "open up" the collections to the public and summer visitors. We discussed possible dates in August for a 1 to 5pm open house in the Town Hall, and landed on two Sundays, August 4 and August 18, hopefully finalizing the date at the next meeting. We'll set up the day before. Jeff encouraged us to take time tonight to look at the collections, to see what items and materials we'd each recommend to be included.

While we are making progress with cataloguing, the public has no way right now of knowing what's in our collections. Jeff is developing a listing of collection boxes by shelf which can provide an overview (numbers of boxes in a particular collection, general content, etc.) for the public, history researchers, and genealogists. Jeff and Gaye will be working to reconcile catalogue item numbers with accession numbers.

The Committee scheduled a hands-on prep session on Sunday, July 21 from 10 to 2, to identify materials to feature in the August Open House. Everyone is invited to participate, make recommendations, and help plan how best to display the materials. This August Open House will be a chance to pull items out of storage, and welcome the public to see artifacts, go through photos and genealogies, school or grange records, for example. Some of these items – more particularly those collections that are secondary (not originals) – could be part of a display at the Wright House, either late August or September?

We talked again briefly about asking the Conservation Commission if they have interesting maps of the island that could be displayed at the Wright House.

**Committee Priorities/Projects:**

- Though busy on a few other fronts, Jeff is gradually updating Cora Tarbox's *Westport Island History, 1605 – 1972*.
- Gaye is tackling the Swanton book update.
- Mary Ellen has researched area historical society membership rates and is drafting a membership brochure for the Friends.
- Paul reminded us of his research on Valentine Tarbox (photographer, Mason).
- Dennis described the recent logging and clean-up activities at the in-holding lot contiguous to the Segerstrom Preserve. This is property that belonged to James Dunton. Dennis shared some of the family history, and it turns out there's a connection with Dedee and Verlie Greenleaf (Violet Apt). Dennis feels this property will be donated by the current owner (and Dunton relative) Dee Kuerzel to KELT to become part of the preserve.
- Paul shared with us the Masons renovation activities at their lodge on Fort Hill Street in Wiscasset (and also a little history of the building that started as a home and turned into the high school around 1900).

**Committee Monthly Meeting Date:** The Committee talked about options for a better day to hold regular meetings. Right now, a few of us have conflicts with this week, and Tuesdays. After some discussion and a vote (a motion by Dennis, seconded by Paul), we agreed to hold our monthly meetings on the first Tuesdays of each month. Meaning, we'll see each other again real soon – Tuesday, July 2.

The meeting was adjourned and members spent time looking at the collection.