

P2 /PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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P3/COLE FARMS: END OF AN ERA

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P5 /GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

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Gray Reflections

A publication of the Gray Historical Society

Spring/Summer 2020



Two Hundred Years Ago...

In 1820, Gray had grown with a few new buildings including a grain store which was built on Main Street. This photo shows the store, later painted with **Haskell's Oat Feed ~ Best on the Market!** on the façade.

By Sharon MacDonald

This year will be a year of many celebrations in the whole country and also in our State of Maine. Four hundred years ago in 1620 a Merchant ship called the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth, a port on the southern coast of England, to a place they named Plymouth, Massachusetts. Many states in the country have celebrations planned for this occasion.

Our State of Maine will have celebrations too because it was 200 years ago in 1820 that we became an independent State apart from Massachusetts.

In 1735 some sixty signatories sought a grant to settle in

this six square mile piece of land which they called New Boston. The grant was given and they tried to settle the township more than once, but because of the Indian War places were burnt and
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The Gray Historical Society will be planning an open house this summer to help celebrate Maine's 200th year and will be featuring a new display of our Selectman's office.



Gray Historical Society

PO Box 544
Gray ME 04039
(207) 657-4476
grayhistorical.org

The Gray Historical Society (GHS) was founded on June 6, 1962 as a community project by Gray Grange. Its purpose is to "collect, preserve, and to share the history of the Town of Gray and the State of Maine".

GHS Board Members

Galen Morrison, President [2021]

Donnell Carroll, Vice President [2020]

Nancy True, Treasurer

Debi Curry, Secretary [2021]

Richard Barter [2020]

Audrey Burns [2022]

Nancy Mason [2022]

Don Neal [2021]

Richard Skilling [2022]

Karen Taylor [2020]

Nancy True [2021]

Donald Whitney [2022]

Nancy Wilson [2022]

Peg Wilson [2020]

Date [YYYY] indicates term expiration.

A Word from Our President

Although the numbers are few at the GHS, the tasks are many.

A review of 2019 gives an insight into the accomplishments of the faithful folks at GHS.

- The annual banquet at the American Legion hall was well attended and we were well fed, enjoying the meal prepared by our wonderful hosts at the Legion. Our guest speaker Phil Morse presented a program on the Narcissus and the history of the Portland Lewiston Interurban trolley.

Pennell Memorial site was cleared and a granite bench and marker has been installed. Work on a map and guide will be completed in 2020 and history panels telling the story of Gray Village will be installed at 3 locations around the village.

One of our goals for this year was the re-creation of the original selectman's office. For nearly 130 years the town government was housed and operated from this office in the front room of the brick Town Hall built in 1837. In the years following 1969 the office was used by the fire department and later the public safety dispatch center.

One of our goals for this year was the re-creation of the original selectman's office. For nearly 130 years the town government was housed and operated from this office in the front room of the brick Town Hall built in 1837.

- A successful open house in June unveiled the new Gray Fire Museum, a display of fire tools, photos, helmets and uniforms depicting the 130-year story of the men and women who protect our town.
- We attended the annual Blueberry Festival, representing GHS with a table of historical items.
- Following the annual Pennell alumni banquet in July, Town Hall was opened to the alumni to view the new Pennell Institute display. Over 30 alumni filtered through the second story display of memorabilia and artifacts.
- Work continues on the 1.5-mile village walk. The Henry

The improvements made to the office area include a new floor, paint, lighting and the cleaning out of the vault. An open house this summer will showcase the selectman's office display at the museum.

I am so grateful for the hands and minds that keep Gray's history. I thank all of you, for giving your precious time and energy to Gray's history story.

I encourage you to join us! You do not have to be a student of Gray's history to be a part of our group, just a desire to help out while learning about the town's history. Gray is making history every day, so come help us collect, preserve, and share!

If the flag is out, we are home!

Contact us by phone or visit our web page for more information.

Galen Morrison, President, GHS

COLE FARMS: END OF AN ERA

For many of us, Cole Farms has been a likeable, loveable, local, lifetime landmark throughout the years! It's been a destination for meetings, lunch with friends, and a reliable stop after our sports events. Actually, for some, our high school years were spent bouncing in and out of Cole's. Why? Because it was one "hot" spot and was open around the clock! If you wanted "action", you rode to Cole's. It was the first job where we learned the value of giving good service, working with the public, and earning some money. For many mothers, it was a great opportunity to be close at home working a few evening shifts to supplement the family income. And as teens graduated, it was an opportunity to work and help support college costs.

In those early days, everyone wore a crisp white uniform down to their shins, white shoes and a sassy little ruffled cotton apron. We punched in at a clock and

relied on Cole's being in business to offer those positions, and and being a large employer to help support the infrastructure of Gray. Think of the FOUR generations of working Cole/

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got our pay "in cash" in small manila envelopes!

There were many happy times, and Cole's was often at the center of them.

Throughout 68 years, the staff relied on Cole's being there and their having a job. The Town

Pollard family members! Through Cole Farm's history, that was the thread that didn't break. Family, friend, staff, and business relationships were fostered through their presence of a giving nature. Cole's supported our schools, our students, our sports teams, extra curricular activities, our neighbors, and families in need. There were many times when Cole's stepped up to share resources with a person who faced a serious illness or a family who was in crisis.

Thank you Cole Farms for your constancy, your generosity, and our shared memories!

*By Sue Wilkinson Austin
"Believe"*



This is what Cole Farms looked like when it opened for business in 1952.

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destroyed and other difficulties also arose. This is an excerpt from the book published by the Gray Historical Society called 'Past and Present 1778-1978', "Consequently, a petition was prepared in August 1777 'humbly to pray your honors to take our distressing circumstances under your Wise Consideration and graint us the Priveliges of an incorporated township.' This was signed by 38 residents of New Boston". It was granted on June 19, 1778 and the township was renamed Gray, in honor of Thomas Gray, a Boston merchant who had been one of the most active and interested proprietors. Gray would be the 39th town to be incorporated.

Two hundred years ago in 1820, Gray had grown with a few new buildings including a grain store which was built on Main Street. Our current Gray Historical Society building was built along the same side of the road in 1836 and served as the town hall. More buildings were erected in the 1830's which form Main Street and now our "Gray Corner".

The Gray Historical Society will be planning an open house this summer to help celebrate Maine's 200th year and will be featuring a new display of a Selectman's office on our ground floor. Also on that floor in two bays we have displays of old tools, old school desks and many more items that have finally been unpacked and displayed. We are also very proud to show our Fireman's display in the last bay of that floor. More details to come later on the open house event. We would love to have everyone come to see our progress!

ODE TO COLE FARMS

There once was a small place that set in a curve
That from the first day was destined to serve.

The meals, oh the meals! Wow, what a deal!
Looking back now they seemed like a steal;
Thirty cent burgers with fries and pies galore;
Had our surrounding towns coming for more

The place started tiny - kinda small;
Then needed to build out to accommodate all;
It didn't take years for it to become "the spot"!

People were happy and they came (and ate) quite a lot;
So, its reputation built just like a Jenny Cole quilt.

The jobs were there for so many to take;
At last a hometown position with money n tips to make!

The years have come and the years have gone;
With the strong thread of Cole Farms that let us all belong

When happiness or sadness came our way;
It was Cole's that we looked for to support the day

Championships, sickness, to death and beyond;
It was Cole's who stepped up and took the baton

The impact wasn't just for our Town of Gray;
Oh No! The presence and support spread out all the way

The network of history this destination has amassed;
'Tis difficult to find any other to surpass!

To dear, oh dear ole' Cole's entwined through our past;
We'll hold to sweet memories till our very last.
To the four generations of the Cole-Pollard clan;
Thank you for your loyalty to a long standing plan

So with sadness tonight we say our adieu
And acknowledge the generosity that's been given by you!

Cole Farms (1952 - 2020) Gray, Maine

Written on January 4, 2020
in the year of our Lord
By Sue Wilkinson Austin

Gone, But Not Forgotten

For many years, GHS member Nancy McMinn has been collecting articles and obituaries of interest to Gray residents from a variety of sources. These volumes spanning about 60 years are now available in a series of binders at the Gray Historical Society Museum. Another collector, Ellen Cole McCann similarly gathered newsworthy articles along with obituaries into a series of 30+ scrapbooks, also now in our GHS research library.

Current GHS Secretary, Debi Curry, has a vision for improving access to the obituaries these volumes contain, which span from early 1900's to the present. She hopes that digitized images will greatly enhance our ability to lookup and share obits from long ago. Though the process of digitizing the articles is labor-intensive, the GHS digital library continues to grow; we now have over 1,500 obituaries on file!

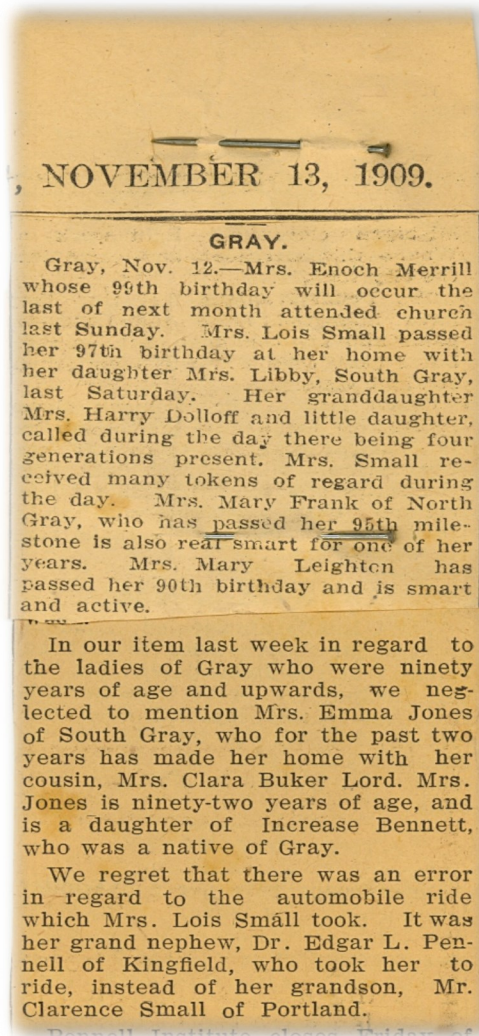
The process is simple: clipped articles are photographed or

scanned into digital format, then straightened, cropped, and color-adjusted as needed. Digitized image files are renamed [surname, first name [year]] to simplify lookups before they are uploaded to our cloud storage.

As time allows, Debi also searches our Gray Village Cemetery on Find a Grave and adds biographic information from obits to memorials, helping to bring more "personality" to our cemetery citizens.

Images of obituaries for Gray citizens are happily accepted for this project, especially if they pre-date 1950 or so! Or, if you'd like us to check our digital archives for one of your own, drop us a note at inquiries@grayhistorical.org.

Though the process of digitizing articles is labor intensive, the GHS digital library continues to grow; we now have over 1,500 obituaries.



The Store: Dry Mills



From *Images of America: Gray Maine* by Louise M. Knapp and the Gray Historical Society:

"The Dry Mills Store was located at the intersection of the North Raymond Road and Route 26. This convenience store, which has served the community for over 125 years under many owners, also served as a post office until 1938, when the post office relocated across the street. As summer visitors and the traveling public came to this area, the store became a center of activity for goods and services."

This photo is best dated by identifying the vehicles parked in front of the store, one of which looks very much like the "Hot Rod Lincoln"! Perhaps one of our readers might suggest a time frame?

“History Helpers”

Most Thursday mornings from about 10AM till noon or 1PM, a small group of Gray Historical Society volunteers meet at the GHS museum to work on various society projects. When they do, the **OPEN** flag goes out and we welcome visitors as well. So, if you see the flag, stop on in!

By Sharon MacDonald

The purpose of the Gray Reflections Newsletter is to keep you all informed of all the activities, upgrades and goings on that has happened at the Society over the past year. We also hope to bring a smile to your face with memories that some of you may remember or some that you never knew existed in the town of Gray. This will be a yearly publication to be received just before the annual banquet with a banquet reservation sheet and a membership form to join or renew membership. Everyone who has an interest in Gray probably has a story or something of interest that we would enjoy putting in our newsletter, we do like to hear from anyone with a story.

We have been very busy with a lot of upgrades from the building to our displays. First, the displays at Pennell Institute have been added to and it is quite a thing to see. If you went to school there be sure to bring your children and grandchildren in to see part of your past, some children would never know it used to be a school.

Dick Skilling has spent many hours scraping, caulking and painting on the outside of our building. On the inside of building he has been filling nail holes, painting and hanging a new ceiling in the hallway going up the stairs, installing lights and heat detectors in the new ceiling and a new emergency light in the stairway. He is working on design plans and cost estimates for a new handicap access ramp. Don Neal has also volunteered his time to

assist Dick with many things.

A lot of work has been done in the selectman's office display from a new floor to cleaning out the old vault that was full of old records. Not to mention the hours of moving furniture around (heavy furniture) and shuffling items back and forth to get at things. To conclude, I am sure Dick has done many things that don't show –like many trips to the dump and hanging our pictures and again moving glass cases and anything else we need moved. Without his many hours of volunteering we wouldn't be where we are today.

We still have a lot of work to do and our goals for the near future are to tag and identify all of the items on display which is a huge undertaking, and create a map of Gray with all the historical places on it. We want to promote our museum and research areas so more public and civic groups and children can benefit. The Fiddlehead School sent children over for a tour which was a big success. School children would have a great experience to come through the museum and see the history of their town. We also are working on and wanting to complete the walking trail through town and make it available for everyone to enjoy. We will again be at the yearly Blueberry Festival as we were last year.

So as you all can see we have accomplished a lot and have a lot in the works. It takes volunteers to accomplish this and we could use many more volunteers. Sally Emery has been indexing scrapbooks and there are a **lot** of scrapbooks. You could work on a number of projects that you might enjoy.

Please think about volunteering for your town of Gray!

GHS ONLINE STORE

Annual Town Reports

Our Annual Reports for the Town of Gray are original from about 1900 through 1990 vary as to historical content

Book: Beyond the Smoke by Galen Morrison

"The names and faces stored in photo albums and fading news clippings now have home and place in the history of Gray, Maine. The men and women who shaped the future of Gray Fire Rescue and the stories of those who lived there are now printed in black and white, to hold and to read."

Catalog of Pennell Institute 1887-8

This slim volume was reprinted from the original with permission of the Pennell Alumni as a fundraiser for the Gray [Maine] Historical Society. Contents include a brief history of Pennell Institute, rules & regulations, listing of students, and course of study.

Book: History, Records, and Recollections of Gray Maine by George T. Hill

"In general, extracts from old records and manuscripts have been printed with spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviations as they appeared in the copies of original material available to me."

Book: Images of Gray, Maine

by Louise M. Knapp

This richly detailed visual history chronicles Gray's last 230 years, beginning with the 18th century, when the early settlers established King's Mast Yard.

**Visit us at the museum
or online at
grayhistorical.org/store
for more items!**



Annual Dinner Meeting

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 – 5:30PM

American Legion Post 86
15 Lewiston Rd, Gray, ME

MENU

Turkey Dinner with Fixin's
Cook's Choice of Dessert

GUESTS WELCOME

Guest Speakers

Jean M. Flahive, Author, Teddy Roosevelt, Millie and the Elegant Ride
Phil Morse, Restoration of the Narcissus

Name(s)

Address

City/State/Zip

Email Address

Phone

_____ Total number of people attending including yourself and guest(s).

Dinner reservations are \$15 per person and must be received no later than April 14, 2020.

Please include your membership dues for 2020

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student Membership \$6 | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership \$150 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Donor \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership \$15 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$500 |

Mail your RSVP/Check to:
Gray Historical Society
PO Box 544, Gray, ME 04039

2020 Annual Member Meeting: Guest Speakers

April 28, 2020

Jean M. Flahive, Author

Teddy Roosevelt, Millie and the Elegant Ride

Phil Morse, Restoration of the Narcissus



With hope and unwavering courage, a feisty young girl chases her dreams during the WWI years.

Millie Thayer is a headstrong farmer's daughter who chases her dreams in a way you would expect a little girl nicknamed "Spitfire" would - running full tilt and with her eyes on the stars. Dreaming of leaving farm life, working in the city, and fighting for women's right to vote, Millie imagines flying away on a magic carpet. One day, that flying carpet shows up in the form of an electric trolley that cuts across her farm.

Learn more about the inspiration for the book from author, Jean M. Flahive AND hear from Phil Morse about his ongoing efforts to restore the Narcissus, the very same trolley car featured in the book.

Gray Historical Society



PO Box 544, Gray ME 04039
grayhistorical.org

Come Visit Us!

GHS is open to visitors from May through October on the first and third Saturday of each month from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM or by appointment.