



Sebago
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SEBAGO ECHOES

Fall 2019

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HISTORIC HOUSE TOUR: THE RUFUS DOUGLASS HOUSE

by Harriet Pinansky



The Rufus Douglass Farmhouse, circa 1860

On a Saturday in early August, we welcomed a large group of visitors to take a tour around our historic home on Hogfat Hill Road. The neighborhood is one of the earliest settlement areas in Sebago, with fields being cleared and farmhouses being built in the early 1800s. The Douglass / Douglas family is prominent here, from the early settlers to those still residing in the area today.

A quick summary of property ownership shows the extent to which the original Douglass family and their extended family and descendants have maintained connections to this area. John Douglass bought the land on Hogfat Hill from Francis Strout of Limington in 1822 and deeded it to his son Rufus Douglass in 1842. We believe the current house was built circa 1840-1850, by Rufus Douglass, after his marriage to Lucy Gray, although there may have been an earlier dwelling on the property. Before his death in 1886, Rufus sold the house and land to his son Charles,

who lived there with his wife, Abbie Whitney Partridge Douglass until his death in 1916. We believe that Abbie had lived close by in Backnippin and had been married to someone with the last name of Partridge before marrying Charles. Abbie inherited the house after Charles' death and we think she lived there until 1942, when she sold it to some of her Whitney relatives. Various Whitney descendants owned it until they sold it to Thomas and Beulah Linkenbach in 1958. Then Ann and Bob Brown bought the house and land in 1962. Bob had grown up just down the road on Hogfat Hill Road and was living in another house on Hogfat Hill with his wife, Ann, and three children, Bobby, Becky and Robin. Robin Gosbee lives next door (one house up the hill) in the house built by her husband, Lane. Robin still owns the land that surrounds our property. She sold her parents' house and 4 acres of the land to us after her mother, Ann, died in 2005.

We developed a partial Douglass family tree for guests on the house tour to see, focusing on the Douglasses who were in some way connected to this house and/or still live on Hogfat Hill and the surrounding area. The original spelling of the family name in this neighborhood was "Douglass" (with two "esses"), but by two generations after Rufus Douglass, the spelling had changed to "Douglas" (with one "ess"). Other Sebago branches of the original Douglass family, for example, the Peaked Mountain Douglass family, did not make this spelling change. Genealogical records confirm that these families are all related. We noted, with interest, the connections by marriage to other prominent Sebago families like the Pikes and the Whitneys.

continued inside...

The original house from the mid 1800s was a simple cape style with steep stairs in the middle. At some point there was a fire. We don't know how much damage it caused but we assume there was rebuilding afterwards. We think this is probably when the kitchen, upstairs bedroom and barn were added. We guess this would have been in the 1870s or early 80s. We have no idea when indoor plumbing was added. The Browns added an oil furnace in the 1970s but didn't make many other changes.

We purchased the house in 2005. A few years later, we completed a major renovation while maintaining the same farmhouse style. One main goal was to make the stairs shallower, which required the addition of a vestibule to make room for the expanded stair run. We added closets in all the bedrooms and a full bath downstairs. We saved as many of the original wood floors as possible, including some extra wide floorboards which we were told mean they are at least 150 years old. They are white pine, yellow pine, Norway pine and some hemlock. You can see the slight difference in colors in the right light. Later on, we added a screened porch for summer comfort. We tried to balance the historic integrity of the old house with the needs of modern living.



Harriet Pinansky in front of the Rufus Douglass Farmhouse, August 2019

We displayed some historic items for our house tour, including a sign from Charles P. Douglass which is at least 100 years old, a Bible which was likely given to Abbie Douglas by her mother, Hannah Whitney, and several photos of the house from different time periods. The oldest photograph dates from about 1880-1890 and shows Charles P. and Abbie Douglas and two of Charles' children, Fred Douglas and Clara Douglas Stone.

Visitors were also able to see and hear the pump organ in the dining room, which dates from the turn of the century. It was in the house when the Browns bought it, and Ann Brown played it frequently. Robin Gosbee took it with her when we bought the house but a couple of years later decided the organ belonged with the house. It was returned and sits in the same spot it occupied for over 50 years.

The foundation of the house is the original granite blocks, typical of houses in Sebago from that time period. I like to imagine the oxen dragging the granite across the fields to build the foundation. A special surprise when we bought the house was the outhouse in a closet in the barn. It's a "three-holer," with two regular and one child-sized hole. The barn attachment was not touched in the renovation. You can still see the lath and plaster walls that connect it to the house. You can also see the slices of trees that made the roof base instead of the 2x4 lumber that would be used today.

From the time we purchased this house, we were aware only of minimum information about it and the Douglass family and descendants who are neighbors. We did a lot more research to prepare for the tour and learned a lot more. It was very interesting digging through the house deeds and the Douglas and Whitney family genealogies. We are glad to have had the opportunity to learn more about our house and the families that lived here, and we are happy to share that history with our Sebago neighbors.

Note from the editors: The houses we live in carry our history. They connect us to our past, to the land, and to the people who used to live there, family members or others. They also represent our present and our future, as we make our homes the best we can to provide shelter, livelihood, comfort, and gathering places for family and friends. We are fortunate to have many wonderful old homes in Sebago, constant reminders of our history.

We are grateful to the Pinansky's for hosting this year's historic house tour, and we look forward to our 12th annual historic house tour in the summer of 2020, the bicentennial of Maine's statehood. We'll be announcing our historic house tour next spring.

SEBAGO ECHOES CONTRIBUTORS

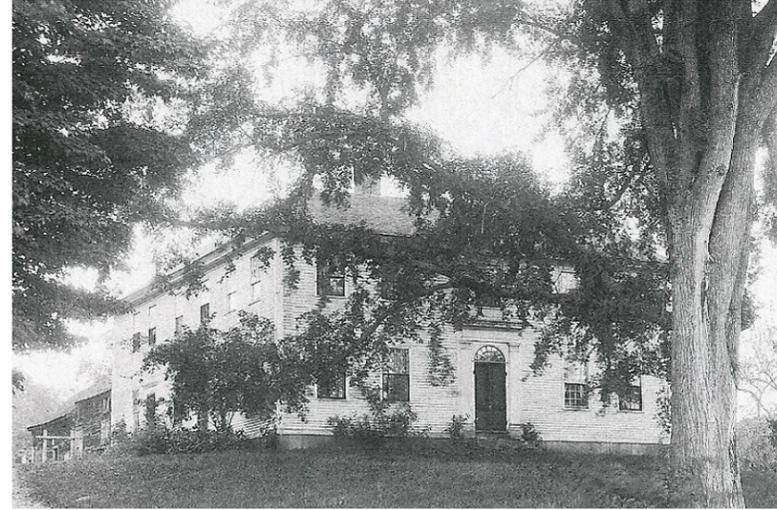
Thank you to the following members for their contribution researching and writing the articles for the Fall 2019 issue:

Donelle Allen	Diana Letellier
Margaret Allen	Harriet Pinansky
Susan Cummings	Nancy Sosman
Susan Gassett	

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To make suggestions for future stories, please email contact@sebagohistoricalsociety.org

HOW MAINE BECAME A STATE



The original William Fitch Homestead, where the 1819 vote was held. Photo taken between 1920 - 30

On November 22, 1819, Baldwin Selectmen William Fitch and Lot Davis sent out a "warrant" – or an announcement of an important piece of town business – to residents of the town, which at that time included most of present-day Sebago. The warrant informed residents that a vote would take place on December 6, 1819, on a proposed constitution for the State of Maine, in the process of being created as a new and separate state.

Maine had been part of Massachusetts from early colonial days. The movement for the District of Maine to separate from Massachusetts began as early as 1785. The final campaigns for independence took place from 1816-19. Early votes failed to get the extra-majority required by the

Massachusetts legislature. There were a total of six votes on the question of separation, starting in 1792. During the war of 1812, Massachusetts did little to protect Maine from the British, and this changed attitudes! By July 1819, a vote for statehood had majority support in all nine Maine counties. The Maine state constitutional convention met in Portland in October 1819. The proposed constitution had strong protections for religious freedom, gave voting rights to blacks, and had no property requirement to vote, but there were no voting rights for the poor, for women, or for Native Americans. The constitution was overwhelmingly approved by a popular vote by January 1820.

During this time period there was no town of Sebago. All settlements in today's town, except for the Hillside neighborhood, were part of Baldwin until 1826. The Baldwin Historical Society maintains records of original documents, including town warrants and voting lists, providing a fascinating and detailed story of how things unfolded.

The Fitch family played an important role. Several of the early votes took place at the Richard Fitch tavern in Baldwin, and the December 1819 vote on the Maine constitution was held at the William Fitch residence in Sebago Center. This historic home burned in 1941, but was rebuilt on the same site on the Bridgton Road, between the old brick schoolhouse and the Town Hall site. The original barn from the early 1800's is still standing. The vote of December 1819 at the William Fitch residence was unanimously in favor of the new constitution for the state of Maine.

FLAVORS OF THE SEASON

Enjoy these recipes from "Sebago's Jubilee Cookbook," published as part of Sebago's sesquicentennial celebration in 1976



DICED MACINTOSH APPLE CAKE

Submitted by Janet Anderson

1 cup sugar	1 1/2 cup sifted flour
2 cups diced apples	1 tsp. baking soda
1 beaten egg	1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 cup vegetable oil	1/2 tsp. salt

Add sugar to diced apples and let set for 10 minutes. Sift flour and spices, baking soda, and salt. Blend oil and egg into apple mixture. Add flour mixture all at once and beat with large wooden spoon until well blended. Pour into well greased and floured 13 x 9 x 2" pan. Bake at 350 for 35 - 40 minutes. Dust with confectioners sugar while still warm. Cake will be thin--like bars

SOUR CREAM APPLE PIE

Submitted by Bonnie Snow

1 cup sour cream	1 egg
3/4 cup white sugar	2 cups apples, diced
2 T. flour	1 unbaked pie shell
1/4 tsp. salt	1/2 cup brown sugar
1 tsp. vanilla	1/3 cup flour
	1/4 cup softened oleo

Beat together sour cream, white sugar, flour, salt, vanilla, and egg. Mix in diced apples and turn into pie shell. Bake at 425 for 25 minutes. Remove from oven and spread with mixture of brown sugar, flour, and oleo. Return to oven and bake 20 more minutes. Delicious!

CONNECTED BY HISTORY: THE STORY OF MALAGA ISLAND – PART 2



*Potter Academy graduating class of 1947
Back Row: Second from right, Olive Riley (married Buddy Darling of Malaga Island); Middle Row: Far right, Norm McKenney;
Front Row: First from left, Lillian Eastman, third from left, Lorraine Decker, and fourth from left, Grace Snow*

In the Summer 2019 issue of the Echoes, we reported on a presentation given by Kate McBrien of the Maine Historical Society about the sad story of Malaga Island. Our historical society curator Donelle Allen first brought our attention to this piece of Maine history, and then with others in our community, we discovered threads of connection between this coastal island and the inland town of Sebago. This article, the second part of the story, describes these fascinating threads of connection.

Malaga Island is located in the New Meadows River estuary, near Phippsburg. At the core of the story is Benjamin Darling, likely a freed slave who settled first on Horse Island at the mouth of the New Meadows River around 1800. Darling’s descendants soon established homes on numerous islands throughout the New Meadows River. Henry Griffin and Fatima Darling Griffin and their family settled on Malaga Island, establishing the mixed-race community that occupied the island’s north end from the 1860s to 1912.

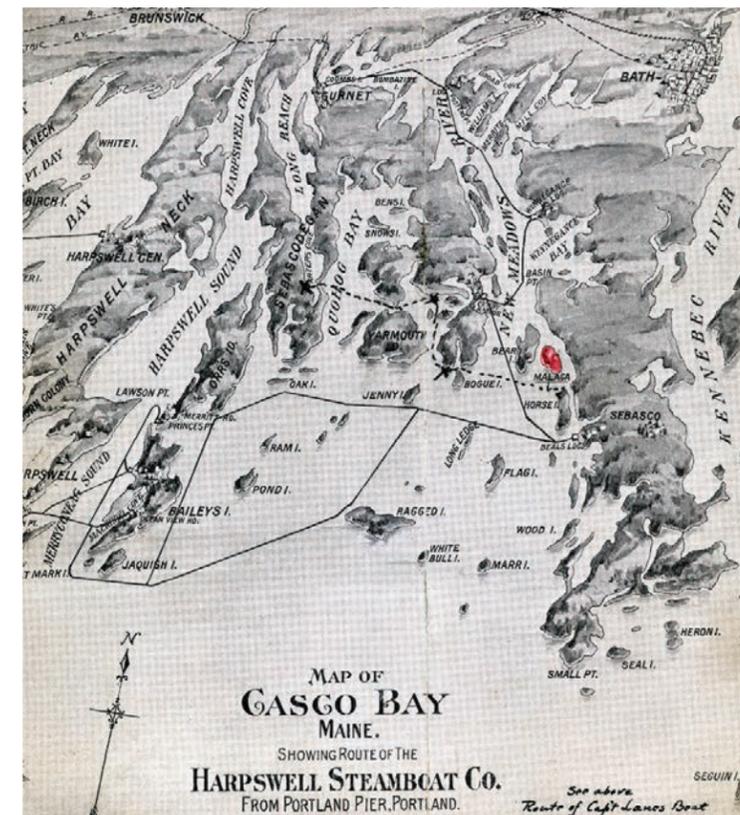
Kate McBrien’s presentation outlined the destruction of this community and its literal removal in 1912, as social and political forces took their toll on a group of

marginalized people. From today’s perspective, it’s notable that the Malaga community was not so different from other island communities of the time. Conditions were poor, but folks worked hard to survive, built simple housing to provide warmth and shelter, developed skills in fishing, crafts and trades, and depended on family connections to survive. The single difference was the mixed-race heritage.

We also learned that for many years, descendants of the original Malaga Island community felt the need to hide their ancestry. Prejudice and slander through the years since 1912 caused many descendants to deny any connection to the island. But attitudes have shifted and now, scattered across Maine and New England, current generations are re-discovering their roots.

One of the connections with Sebago involves Potter Academy, founded in 1895 as specified in the will of Dr. Joseph Fitch Potter as a high school for Sebago residents and later also for students from other Maine towns who were able to reside in the dormitories. Potter Academy closed as the local high school in 1967, and the main building burned down in 1974, but the site in Sebago Center is still prominent in the town as the location of the Town Office and the adjacent Town Hall building, which was the Potter Academy gym. Local residents remember that the class of 1947 was a large, active and accomplished group. Sue Cummings remembers stories about three girls from that class who were collectively known as “rain, snow, and hail” (Lorraine (“Rain”) Decker, Louise Snowe, and Gloria Hale). Another member of the Class of ’47 was Olive Riley, whose family lived in East Baldwin. At Potter Academy, Olive met Carroll Orville “Buddy” Darling, a descendent of the Malaga Island Darling family. Olive and Buddy married soon after high school, though apparently against the wishes of her family. They later moved back to Cundy’s Harbor, not far from Phippsburg and Malaga Island, where they lived until their deaths in 2013. A little genealogical research shows that Buddy Darling’s father was Merton Ernest Darling (1906 – 1984), who would have been a young child at the time of the destruction and removal of the Malaga Island community in 1912. We don’t know how or why Buddy Darling made his way to Potter Academy, where he was a student for a short time. We do know that Potter Academy was known as a Grade A Academy, with a strong program and excellent facilities, such as dormitories for boys and girls, and a large gymnasium, much of this made possible by the generous endowments of the Spaulding family. Potter Academy attracted students from towns that lacked such facilities, and Buddy Darling was probably one such student.

Another completely separate connection between Sebago and Malaga Island comes from Donelle Allen’s friendship with Heather Elizabeth Stewart, who lived in North Bridgton and attended the Lake Region High School, graduating in the early 1980s. The Stewart family had connections through their father who had lived on an island in the Malaga area and who is descended from the original Malaga Island community. One day, Heather told Donelle that someone at the Maine Historical Society had done a lot of research and was giving presentations about the place her family was from – Malaga Island. Donelle went to work and discovered Kate McBrien, contacted her, and convinced her to come to Sebago to give a presentation. And the rest, as they say, is history! Heather was among those who attended Kate McBrien’s presentation last May, and she was fascinated by the new details she learned about the history of Malaga Island.



1907 Map of Casco by with Malaga Island highlighted in red

Finally, yet another chapter of the story of connection comes from Diana Martin Letellier who in September 2009 went with her Aunt Lorraine Decker and Norman McKenney to visit old Potter Academy classmates Lillian and Mary Eastman, and Olive Riley Darling, all members of Potter Academy Class of 1947. It was during this visit that Diana learned of Lillian Eastman’s grandson’s book about Malaga Island. The Eastman family was from the Harpswell area, and like Buddy Darling, they travelled to Sebago to attend Potter Academy, then later returned to

live near Harpswell, where Lillian Eastman was to marry James Herrick in 1951. This grandson of Lillian Eastman was Matt Herrick. He had become fascinated by all the stories he had heard about Malaga Island growing up in the mid-coast area, and he had just completed a book on the subject before his early and unexpected death in January 2009. His book, a combination of history and story-telling about Malaga Island, is titled “Dis Place: A True History of Malaga Island.” The book was published privately by the Will Dale Press and is now only available through the family or the Maine State archives. Diana was able to purchase a copy at a nearby gift shop in Cundy’s Harbor before returning home from that memorable 2009 visit. The Sebago Historical Society hopes to secure copies of this book, for the Spaulding Library and our own collection. Written by the grandson of a Potter Academy graduate, this book is a literal representation of the unexpected connection through history of two otherwise distant and different Maine places – Sebago and Malaga Island.

The continuing story of Malaga Island reminds us that there are lessons to be learned from history, and that whether you come from “this place or that place”, or from “dis place or dat place”, we are all connected through our stories, our actions, and the choices we make as we follow our life pathways.

DID YOU KNOW?

The only commercial apple orchard in Sebago was started in the 1930s by Edward Douglas. Ownership changed to Robert Waterman in the 1940s, followed by John Gyger. John and Ellen Lucy currently own and operate Douglas Hill Orchard on Orchard Hill Road. You can pick macs, courtlands, red and golden delicious during September and October.



PIKE CEMETERY TOUR



It was a lovely fall day on October 19th when we met at the Pike Yard Cemetery off Allen Road to learn about some of the early residents of Sebago, the family of Oliver Morrill Pike, Esq. and his wife Sarah Dudley Page Pike. This old family cemetery is located in the corner of a hillside field on the lower slope of Douglas Mountain. The Pikes settled here in the early 1800s, living first in a small cabin while they built the large federal style farmhouse further down the hill – now the home of the Allen family. Twelve Pike family members from three generations are interred here, the youngest only one and a half, the oldest eighty-five years old. Their lives and deaths provide stories of the ups and downs of the 1800s for families and small farmers in this part of Maine as well as the connections the family established with the community then and now. After the cemetery tour, some members of the group hiked up “Pike’s Peak” and enjoyed the magnificent views of hills and mountains in full fall foliage.



FALL FESTIVAL IN REVIEW



Left: Ted Davis on the grindstone; Right: Donna Cook on the cider press

Traditional skills were on display at the 3rd annual Fall Festival Open House on Saturday, Sept. 21. Weather was perfect, allowing exhibitors to spread out on the lawn in front of the Display Shed to show their crafts.

Machines were turned by hand or foot was the focus of the day. Sherrill Brown brought her sock knitting machine and cranked out a foot and toe while we watched. An antique grindstone was being turned by foot. Ted Davis was sharpening axes on a treadle grindstone he had discovered in his grandfather’s shed and brought back to life.

Dick Allen brought an antique-style toy he had made, attached to a treadle, a “limberjack” that jumped and danced. Dick pedaled the toy while making music on his hammered dulcimer, also hand-built. And the bean thresher in the display shed got a good cranking from a young attendee who was enthralled by everything he saw.

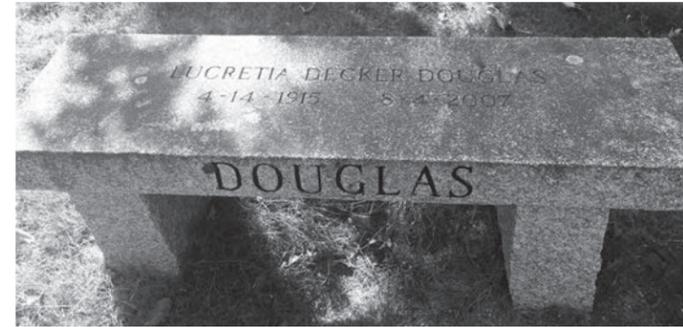
Refreshments were churned on the spot: Donna Cook ran a cider press that ground up a lovely blend of apples and pressed out their juice, while Rick Dennen manned the hand-turned ice-cream maker. His chocolate and vanilla recipes were a hit! Donelle Allen cranked, too, on a small churn turning cream to butter. We finished the day well-fed and inspired by the ingenuity of these old-time ways.



Left: Donelle Allen churning butter; Right: Dick Allen on the dulcimer

ECHOES FROM THE PAST: REMEMBERING LUCRETIA DOUGLAS

By Diana Letellier



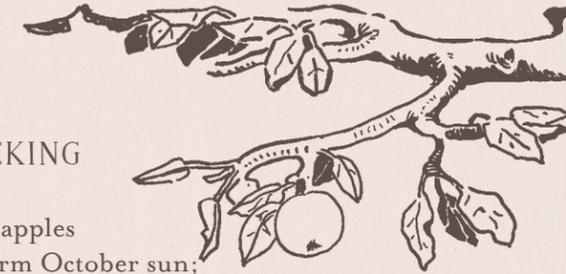
Lucretia (Decker) Douglas passed away in 2007, but in her 92 years she lived a life that many would envy. Why? Because she managed to surround herself with interesting people, to live in a town that she loved, and to engage with life in so many ways that she enjoyed. She had a reputation as a talented cook and farmer, and later in her life she became a popular writer for the Bridgton News, known as “The Cricket” It was there in her column that she was able to share stories and photos about a group that was important to her, the Sebago Historical Society.

While many of her writings were tongue-in-cheek recollections, she also took the opportunity to promote current happenings and activities at the SHS and got her readers involved. One such fan was a gentleman from Bridgton named Tom Willins. He enjoyed her column, began a friendship with Lucretia, and developed an interest in the SHS. He donated a Sebago Boat built by C.D. Martin to the Society’s collection. He did so instead of giving it to his own town’s historical society, while also turning down an offer from the Maine Maritime Academy to purchase the boat for \$3,000! Mr. Willins generously gave monetary contributions to the SHS over the years as well. All of this came about because Lucretia Douglas enjoyed writing and used her talents to promote a Sebago organization she found important.

While she was never an officer, Lucretia contributed to the success of the SHS by sharing news about what they did. She also suggested the creation and sales of calendars as a fund-raising effort and worked on that committee for five years. Her idea turned out to have lasting power, as the publication of the SHS annual calendar is one of its most successful ventures. Lucretia even suggested the name of this newsletter – Sebago Echoes – so we are proud to honor her legacy here and to acknowledge the role she and her extended family played and continue to play in the community life of Sebago. Thanks to “The Cricket” for reminding us that caring for the past puts us on a good road for the future.

JACK BARNES POETRY PROJECT

As we continue to work towards our goal of sharing the poetry of the late Jack Barnes with the community, here are two of our favorites! Jack loved the outdoors in all seasons, but the fall season seemed to have a special attraction for him, as many of his poems have an autumn theme.



APPLE PICKING

All day I pick apples
Under the warm October sun;
All night I pick again
In dreams the apples of the day.



FALL PLOWING

All through the crisp October day
As the leaves come showering down,
I have held firmly to the handles
Of my grandfather’s ancient plow.
Sending furrow after furrow
Trailing up towards the sky;
And now that darkness
Is creeping silently over the hills
And the lights in the farmhouse are flickering on,
It is the time for steeds and master
To trudge wearily to the barn.

SEBAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY MISSION

To encourage and promote an interest and appreciation of the history of the Town of Sebago through the collection, research, and preservation of such information, materials, or items and to develop educational programs of historical or genealogical importance relating to Sebago's history.

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