2024—2025 Newsletter

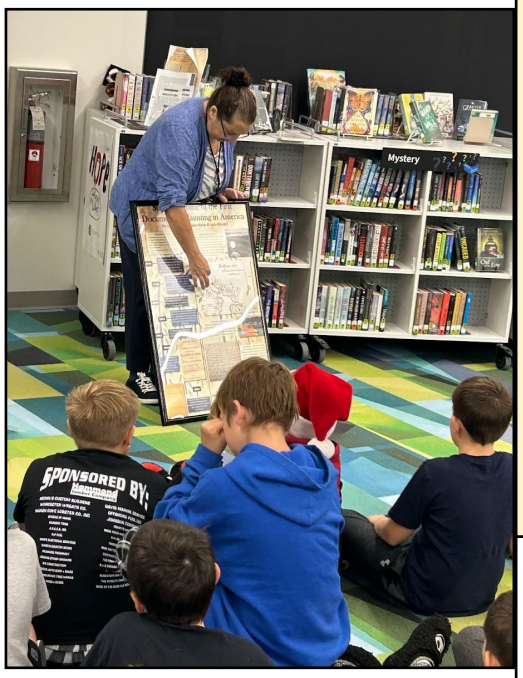
the Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society

E. Burell

The Ghost of Nelly Butler in the Sumner Learning Campus Library

SSHS Board Member and Sumner Library/Media Teacher, Judy Ashby, shared the story of the first documented haunting in the United States, which happened right in Sullivan. Sixth graders sat on the library floor and listened while Ms. Ashby read from primary and secondary source articles that had been part of the Summer 2024 museum exhibit.

Ms. Ashby also spoke about why learning about the history of the ghost story wasn't the same as saying ghosts were real or not, but was important because the people at the time believed. Students were fascinated and were excited to learn about local history and ask questions.



Judy Ashby points to the map of hauntings in Sullivan.

Special thanks goes to sixth grade English Language Arts teacher Tara Peterson for requesting the collaboration.

SSHS welcomes opportunities to visit your classroom or school!

Archives & Museum

Open Tuesdays & Saturdays
June to September
(and by appointment anytime)

P.O. Box 44
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Sullivan, ME 04664
(207) 422-0995/266-4448

info@sullivansorrentohistory.org
www.sullivansorrentohistory.org

Visit our Facebook page!

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Dedication—Austin Ash

The 2025 SSHS newsletter is dedicated to long-time member Austin Ash. People know Austin in many ways: friend, neighbor, mailman, musician, historian and most recently for the beautiful stoves he and his son Mark restore. We at the Historical Society know him for his knowledge of Sullivan's past, especially East Sullivan where he lives and delivered the mail for many years. He authored accounts of the Civil War service of veterans of that conflict from Sullivan and several surrounding communities. His effort for Sullivan is highlighted in another section of this newsletter. When a tough question comes up someone will invariable say "let's ask Austin."

Thank you, Austin, for your continued support.

President's Report 2024

The Archives/Museum were open for regular hours for most of the summer. Individual visits may be scheduled any time of year by calling us at 422-0995 or e-mail at gandjedwards@gwi.net or info@sullivansorrentohistory.org .

2024 has been a productive year:

- The Annual newsletter was published
- The annual Hotson Scholarship to a Sumner Senior was awarded to Matthew Carney, who is pursuing an engineering degree at UMaine.
- The Board of Directors is meeting bi-monthly. Leslie Potashner of Sorrento has joined the board in place of Darla Crocker. Leslie is on the Exhibit Committee and has helped with some projects. We have room for more members.
- Committees were elected to work on Programs, our Collection, Exhibits and the Urann project. All of the committees need additional members.
    - ◊ Program Committee: Chair Tobey Crawford, Members: Jeanne Edwards, George Deans, Judy Ashby
    - ◊ Museum/Exhibit: Chair Judy Ashby, Members: Tobey Crawford, Leslie Potashner
    - ◊ Collections Committee: Chair DJ Deans: Members Tobey Crawford, Sam Younger
    - ◊ Urann Committee: Gary Edwards, George Deans, Arthur Keenan, Dereck Connors, Tobey Crawford. This project has been on hold but it is a priority for this year. Any help with the project is welcome.

- Winter History Hour virtual programs included:
    - ◊ January: The French History of Upper Frenchman Bay
    - ◊ February: The Story of Grassmere Cottage: Isaac & Lee Gwynn Lawrence
    - ◊ March: Mystery Tusk: Searching for Elephants in the Maine Woods
    - ◊ May: The Manor Inn and Swiss Chalet

- Summer in-person events included:
    - ◊ June: Dwayne Tomah– Preserving Language: The 1890 Passamaquoddy Wax Cylinders
    - ◊ July: Stephen Sanfilippo- Songs From Way Downeast
    - ◊ August: Calm Command: US Chief Justice Fuller in His Times 1888-1910
    - ◊ September: Cider Pressing at the Farmstead Barn
    - ◊ October: Lights Out, a gathering of local historical societies hosted by SSHS

<u>Commentary</u>

The Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society was formed in 1972 by a group of folks from the two communities that were once one. The mission was "To collect and preserve" our history. Since that time, dedicated volunteers have built an amazing collection to make our history available for present and future generations. The collection includes town records, school records, old photos that give a clear picture of what life was like and how the communities developed, family histories, and artifacts that bring history to life. S-SHS purchased the Paul Urann house on Route 1 in 2012 and has been slowly restoring it to serve as an interactive museum to highlight what life was like in the past. The Society has been working to use social media to keep the public informed and our holdings as accessible as possible.

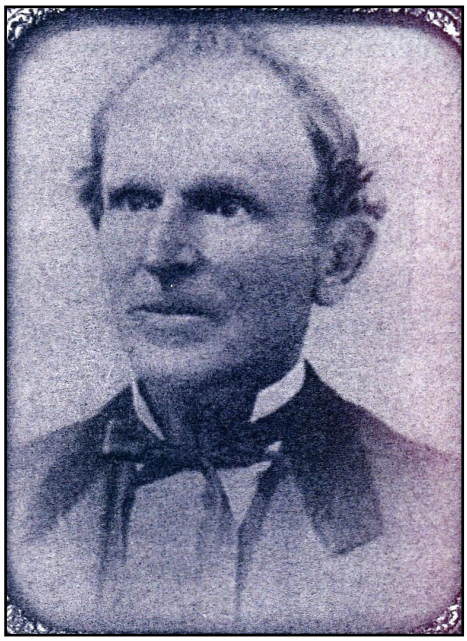
This past year we were able to recruit new board members but we still have several places available. While our membership has remained stable, the corps of regular volunteers who give of their time, energy and expertise is shrinking.

S-SHS is in the people business. We offer the community a chance to look into its past and an opportunity to participate in preserving and displaying that past. —Gary Edwards, President

Civil War Soldiers and Sailors of Sullivan, Maine—by Jeanne Edwards

In the Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society Archives a black, spiral bound volume is entitled "Sullivan, Maine, Civil War," compiled by Austin Ash. This volume contains information on the Sullivan and Waukeag men who served during the Civil War, as well as lists of veterans of Gouldsboro, Hancock, and Franklin, but with less information. Opening this binder, one finds that each enlistee profile contains information on date of enlistment, the unit and company assigned, perhaps a photo, dates of enlistment and discharge, and perhaps marriage and death information.

The first profile is James Robert Ash, who enrolled in 1862. He was wounded twice in Deep Bottom, Virginia and wounded again at an unknown location. He returned home in 1865, married Sarah Ann Hooper, and lived another forty-nine years, dying in 1914. He and Sarah are buried in the Johnson Cemetery on the Grange Hall Road.



James Robert Ash

James Robert Ash, Austin's great-grandfather is one of the reasons he tackled this project. He wanted to find out more about his relatives who fought in the war. After working for the U.S. Postal Service in this area for thirty years, perhaps he had time to work on this.

About Austin Ash – when he was about five years old, he, his divorced mother and his brother Peter moved into the Philip N. Martin, Jr. household. He was motivated by his stepfather, a very good violinist, to learn to play different instruments. Mr. Martin played with a number of dance bands in the area, such as Charles Wescott's Band, "Charlie's Angels." Mr. Ash began playing alto saxophone with the bands. They might play in Franklin or Trenton, or in town at the Sorosis Hall, better known today as the Sorrento-Sullivan Recreation Center. When asked if he might have any advice for young people today, Mr. Ash responded, "Well, yes. Find something you like. It could be music, politics, or whatever. Learn all you can about it, …and stick with it."

Post Civil War, veterans formed an organization called the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a precursor of current organizations like the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). The local group met at a camp on Tunk Pond and the John Dority Grange hall.

G. A. R. Camp at Tunk Pond

Can you help? Not all Civil War soldiers in Mr. Ash's book have been located. If you are interested, the historical society could use your help.
Here is a list of a few men with sparse identification: Corporal Clifford E. Bragdon, George Bragdon, Sgt. James C. Chilcott, James N. Durney, Charles F. Colson.

From Our Collections

"A good foundation starts with your feet, so protect them well, for they carry you through life's journey."
Unknown author.

Our clothing collection includes these three examples of how our ancestors protected their feet, from the very humble work clog to the elegantly crafted wedding slippers.

Men's hand-made hide moccasins, tightened by a leather strap feeding through the tongue and secured by two 1 5/8"brass rings. Worn by Jon Webber, a re-enactor in Captain Sullivan's company in both bicentennial celebrations of the American Revolution in 1976 and of the Penobscot Expedition in 1979.

Donated by Susan Webber.

Embroidered, silk wedding slippers of Miriam Donnell who was married in Sullivan on December 27, 1789 to John Bane [Bean]. The slippers originally had silver buckles. The silk is in very fragile condition but the sole of the shoe is secure including the tiny hand stitching around the heel. The leather soles are held to the shoe last by wooden pegs. Miriam's wedding dress was of a very heavy cream grosgrain silk.

Donated by the Estate of Margaret Caldwell. The slippers passed to M. Caldwell from her Grandmother Card who received them from Josiah and John Bean. Miriam was Grandmother Card's Aunt.

This pair of hand-carved wooden clogs with black leather toe covering was found in the attic of the Heath House in Sullivan Harbor, possibly in the early 1980s. There is no date on the clogs but a note with them says that before 1840, there were no "right" and "left" shoes. The leather is attached to the wooden sole by small metal staples pounded over a continuous piece of thin wire around the toe. The 12" length suggests these were worn by a man.

Donated by Mr. and Mrs. David Killary

SSHS Board of Directors
President—Gary Edwards
Vice President—Tobey Crawford
Treasurer—Lynn Dunbar-Murphy
Secretary—Judy Ashby

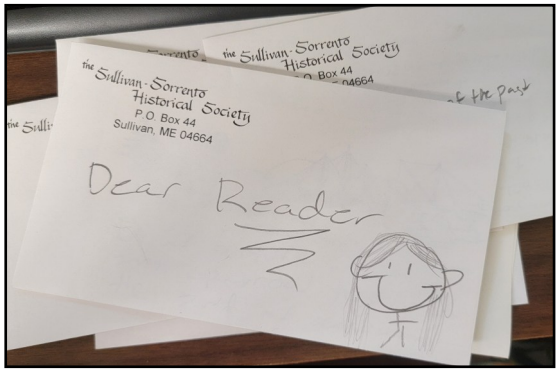
Board Members

DJ Deans
George Deans
Jeanne Edwards
Leslie Potashner
Sam Younger

Won't you join us? We're always looking for new board members and committee members!
Email info@sullivansorrentohistory.org

Communications & Outreach Update for 2024

2024 concluded my second year with SSHS, and it was a busy one. In January I compiled the annual newsletter with pieces contributed from our board members, and then facilitated and hosted a full lineup of virtual History Hours (and even presented on one!) along with keeping our YouTube channel updated. A big part of my work involves creating content for our Facebook page to keep folks engaged. This means combing through the archives and other resources, and a good deal of research. It also involves digitally repairing photos, and colorizing them. The entire process is highly satisfying, and I love interacting with the public on each post.



As Communications Coordinator, being active in each of SSHS' committees is vital to my work in making what we do accessible to the public. The planning and coordinating of programs and exhibits are among my favorite things to do. For the 2024 season, an interactive exhibit titled "Letters to the Past" was a fun way to engage folks with copies of real letters written by Sullivanites of centuries past. I selected letters from our archives, photocopied them, and put them in envelopes with a special "treasure" - an old foreign coin in each, and put them in the mailbox cubbies of the old North Sullivan Post Office counter in the museum. Fresh paper, envelopes and pencils were provided at the service counter, along with a request that in exchange for a treasure letter from the past, folks write a note to a person of Sullivan's past and put it in the mail slot. This was a great success, and we received some very interesting and amusing letters, especially from children. I look forward to working with our community members on more ways to engage the public!

—Tobey Crawford, Communications Coordinator Email: tobey@sullivansorrentohistory.org

Upcoming Events

History Hour Winter 2025 Schedule
Held via Zoom online—free to all! To register, visit our website or Facebook page.
March 11th, 7pm: The Empty Sleeve– A Maine Boy's Story of the Civil War
April 8th, 7pm: The Story of the Singing Bridge

Summer Programs 2025 (dates TBA)
June: Dr. Dwayne Tomah at the Farmstead Barn
July 12th: Martha Ballard, Franklin's Bicentennial
August: TBA
September: Ricker Blacksmith Demonstration at the Urann House
October: Cider Pressing at the Farmstead Barn

Dues for the Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society are being collected for the period of January 2025 through December 2025

Enclosed are my dues as checked:

_____ Individual $15.00

_____ Family $25.00

_____ Life Member $100.00

_____ Donation

Scan the QR code to renew online!

Mail this form with your dues to:
Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society
P.O. Box 44
Sullivan, ME 04664
-or-
Renew online on our website!
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