

The Sou'west Voyage

Norwood Cove Greening Island Southwest Harbor Manset Seawall

Mount Desert Islander

Boston Cane goes to soon-to-be centenarian

By Sarah Hinckley
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SOUTHWEST HARBOR — LaVerne Redlon is set to turn 100 this month and the town has presented her with the Boston Post Cane as an early present.

Board of Selectmen Chairman Kristin Hutchins presented Redlon with the cane on Dec. 22 at her home just off Main Street where she lives with her daughter, Jeanne Boyd.

In 1909, over 700 Boston Post Canes were given to New England towns as a publicity stunt by the Boston Post Newspaper. At that time, only men were presented with the canes because they were the only ones considered citizens. Even though women were given the right to vote in 1920, Southwest Harbor did not present the cane to a woman until 1958. Redlon joins at least 10 other centenarians on the list of recipients for the town, the most recent of whom was Mary Orcutt Harkins.

Thirty years ago, Redlon bought her house in Southwest Harbor, making the move to live here permanently with her second husband five years later after she retired. He died a couple of years after the move, according to Boyd.

If one were to ask Redlon the key to a long life, she cites it often, according to her daughter; eat healthy, don't smoke and don't drink (alcohol).

Born and raised in Illinois, Redlon was one of three children. As a young woman, she made her way to Philadelphia and joined the Navy for three years. During that time, she served as a storekeeper. Eventually, Redlon moved to Massachusetts and worked on a flower farm and for the postal service.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SWH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

On Dec. 22, Board of Selectmen Chairman Kristin Hutchins presented LaVerne Redlon with the Boston Post Cane, an honor presented to the town's oldest resident. Redlon is set to turn 100 years old later this month.

When she retired, Redlon was the postmaster at a post office in Duxbury, Mass. From there, she made her way north to the coast

of Maine.

Although she has been homebound throughout the pandemic, Redlon does get out at least a dozen times throughout the year.

"I do take her out once a month to get her hair done," said Boyd. "She used to like to go to Seawall and just sit and watch the water."

Since being in Southwest Harbor, Redlon has been a member of the town's Conservation Committee and a volunteer at the Charlotte Rhoades Park and Butterfly Garden and the Southwest Harbor Public Library. For the library, Redlon helped with their occasional fund drives and sent personal thank you notes to all who donated.

After retiring, Redlon did a fair share of international travel, according to Boyd. She has gone on an African safari, taken an art class in France and visited Russia twice, at least once as an exchange through the Surry Opera Company. When it was safe to do so, Redlon went out regularly with the walking group Footloose Friends that meets on Tuesdays. She walked throughout the year on different trails around the area, with a smaller group in the winter that grew to larger numbers in the summer with seasonal participants.

Another important local group Redlon was a part of was the Call Girls. Made up of older, single women, members of the group would make phone calls daily to check in on each other.

"In the morning, they would go down the list and make sure everyone was OK," said Boyd. She explained that if the recipient didn't answer, the caller would go in person to check on them. "Most of her friends have passed away. But she had a good time when they were here."

We would like to thank Sarah Hinckley and The Mount Desert Islander for allowing us to reprint their article on the Boston Cane, thank you!

While the pandemic that began last year curtailed many activities, we at SWHHS have continued a busy year behind the scenes. As you may already know, the repairs to **Save Our Steeple** began April 14. Part of this project will be having the stained-glass windows restored, with the first one already being worked on.

Work on the interior of the former church continues as the hanging system for exhibiting artifacts will soon be installed, as we prepare to transform the former sanctuary into a museum to exhibit the rich history of our area.

The support of our future exhibits is our collection of local history artifacts, maps, books, and documents. We know that documenting and securing our collection is of highest importance. The Collection Committee continues to verify our inventory while adding items to our on-line digital archive system while the collection area in the Gleaners Hall is being revamped and secured. The final step will be to install several units of shelving, locking file cabinets, a locking storage cabinet, and a bookcase. These items are all new and were purchased with funds from a donor who realizes the importance of having a secured and orderly collection area.

We are hopeful that sometime this summer or fall that we will be able to have a community event so everyone can visit The Meetinghouse to see all of our efforts.

Aimee Williams

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Membership Dues

You can now start sending in your dues for 2021! **The date above your name on the blue address page shows when your membership expires.** We look forward to receiving your dues so that we can continue mailing you the newsletter. We also offer the option of receiving the newsletter by email, with a spot on the blue cover page for your email address. **Please fill in the email address only if you wish to receive future newsletters that way. Those who elect email delivery will still receive newsletters by regular mail because we enclose return envelopes with that mailing for your convenience.**

Website Information (swhhs.org):

Our website is a wealth of knowledge about the historical society! Along with basic information about our by laws, list of board members, tax status, and contact information, there is a complete list of our hundreds of holdings--- which is searchable by keyword! Please feel free to like us on Facebook as well to follow our updates on our Steeple project.

[\(https://www.facebook.com/SWHhistory/\)](https://www.facebook.com/SWHhistory/)

Officers: Aimee Williams (P), Leslie Watson (VP), Patty Pinkham (T), Beth Geiser (S); **Board Members:** Anne Welles, Susan Buell, Merlin Billy, Julie Fernald, Bernice Klausky, Al Michaud, Henryetta Ponczek, Ralph Stanely, Rich Viera

S. O. S SAVE OUR STEEPLE!

Our Meetinghouse needs our help. The steeple is barely hanging on, and must be replaced.

"... the steeple is in crisis and is dangerous, a particular heavy wind...could potentially bring it down or damage it further." These are the words of Beldon Morse, the owner of "the Steeple People", of Jonesport. Morse was commissioned by the Maine Steeple Fund Program to assess the condition of the steeple, and to create a cost estimate for repair.

To repair the steeple components, spire, belfry and plinth, Morses' estimate is \$135,000. The estimate includes a cherry picker, aerial lift, materials, labor, and other probable costs, i.e., insurance, clean-up, and lodging.

The GOOD NEWS: Our grant application to the Maine Steeple Fund Program was approved to the tune of \$60,000!!! Thank you to the Fund, and to the work of our SOS Committee who worked on this grant.

More GOOD NEWS: A very generous donor has created a \$20,000 MATCH! Every dollar raised up to \$20,000 will be MATCHED. We appreciate this anonymous donor!

How can YOU HELP? 1. SPREAD the WORD- Tell you friends about our campaign to SAVE the STEEPLE. For over 150 years, our steeple has been a navigational beacon for boats coming into the harbor. And we want to ring our bell again! Let's honor our heritage and Save Our Steeple.

2. HELP with the fundraising letter- In June, we will be sending our a fundraising letter to our large mailing list. We will need your help with hand addressing and stuffing envelopes.

3. PLEASE let us know if you know of anyone who would be interested knowing more about SOS. We are happy to meet and talk to prospective donors about this important project.

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4. MAKE a DONATION- With our \$20,000 matching grant, all donations up to that amount are doubled. NO donation is too small. We appreciate EVERY donation. Work will start soon! Let's raise the money and get it done!

A REMINDER: When you make a donation to the campaign, PLEASE write "Steeple and Capital Projects" on the memo line.

Questions, ideas, concerns? the SOS Campaign Committee is eager to hear from you- Leslie Watson, Aimee Williams, Julie Fernald and Susan Buell

We would like to give a special thank you to all of our donors and donations that we have received since November--- thank you! Our next newsletter we will continue our recognition section for those that have given us support, as well as a special section for the In Memory donations.

The Southwest Harbor Historical Society is a 501c3 non-profit. All donations are tax-deductible. SWH Historical Society, PO BOX 272, Southwest Harbor, 04679



Photos of the church courtesy of Julie Fernald

The Best of Chris's Pond

By Bernice Klausky

Spring has sprung,
The Ice is gone,
No more skating on Chris's Pond ---- Until next winter!



Photo of Lawler's ice business on his pond, credited to SWH Public Library digital archives

As for me and a few of my 'uptown friends' during the 40's and 50's, we spent hours on the pond. Manset and Norwood Cove kids had their own skating places.

The group that hung out here most often consisted of Mary Ramsdell (Mitchell), Meredith Rich (Hutchins), Morgan Grindle, Margaret Reed (Brown), Juanita Dunbar (Anderson), Jerry Ramsdell, Bill Curran, MaryAnn Carroll (Minctons), and a few others on occasion.

On Christmas afternoon (weather permitting!) there we were trying out the new skates Santa brought us. The girls were working on perfecting figure 8's and the boys-- besides teasing the girls--- were playing their version of hockey with broken tree branches and an empty tin can. Nobody needed hockey sticks or a puck to have a good time and we made our own rules. Then there was the whip! You grabbed hands until you had several people in a line and you began turning so that the outside person had to skate fast to keep up and hang on for dear life. What fun we had! *(Cont. page 6)*

After very cold weather it was time to cut the ice to be stored in the ice house. Men would gather with long saws to cut the ice into blocks that were floated and pushed up the sluice. They went to the upper level of the "house" to be stored in sawdust for future sale and use. Christopher Lawler was the owner of the property and had the ice business as well as other enterprises.

In those days (1940's), many folks still had the old fashioned ice boxes. It had a few or many different compartments. Ice was placed in one that usually had metal or tin sides and an open spot on the bottom for melting ice to be caught in a "drip pan". If one did not empty it often you had a wet floor! The other compartment sides were usually porcelain. A good example of an ice box can be seen today in the entry of Helen's Restaurant in Ellsworth, though that one is larger than what was in most single family homes.

Chris kept two horses in the lower part of the "house". They had several uses and one was to draw the ice wagon. It was a four wheeled wagon with high sides, a seat for the driver, a roof, and an open back to remove the ice for the customers. When Chris arrived on Wesley Ave, Mary Ramsdell and I would run to meet him and ride up high on that seat behind those big horses--- we felt like we owned the world! Chris stopped at the house of his customer and would check to see the amount of ice they needed that day, then would chisel down a hunk, and all while wearing his rubber cobblers' apron he would carry the hunk in the ice tongs to place it in their ice box.

One night as my father was going to the bathroom he spotted the flames. He ran to the telephone and called the night operator to trip the fire alarm. In those days the operator had a switch that set off the fire whistle that was atop the then fire station (now the police station). Chris's ice house was afire. When Dad got home front the conflagration toward morning he said they were unable to get the horses out.

After school the next day Mary and I went to view the devastation, and we sat on the bank of the pond and cried. Although we had not ridden on the wagon for a while it was viewing the end of our childhood and we were overcome with sadness for those two beloved horses.

That afternoon a new electric refrigerator was delivered to our house. I have often wondered if just maybe there were more refrigerators sold in Southwest Harbor that day than any day before or since!

Not having had skates on my feet for several years I don't think I'll ever skate again at this age BUT as I watch today's young folks out there I hope they are having as much fun as we "kids" had and will hold the wonderful memories we carry.

Next winter, get out your skates and go glide over the pond. Practice your figure 8's or play hockey or just sit and watch your kids, grand kids or great grand kids and quietly say a little "thank you" for Chris and this wonderful place.

Bernice Hancock Klausky

Thanks to Sharon Snurkowski and her first grade class at Pemetic, we present the thoughts of our own first graders on their thoughts about where they live and go to school!

Southwest Harbor and Pemetic

By Pemetic First Grade

Southwest Harbor is beautiful.
Pemetic is the best school.
I love Southwest Harbor! It is amazing!
I love Pemetic!
Pemetic is super fun.
Southwest Harbor is home.
Pemetic is awesome!
Pemetic is a fun place.
Pemetic is beautiful, fun, and happy!
Pemetic is so cool.
Pemetic is special to me!

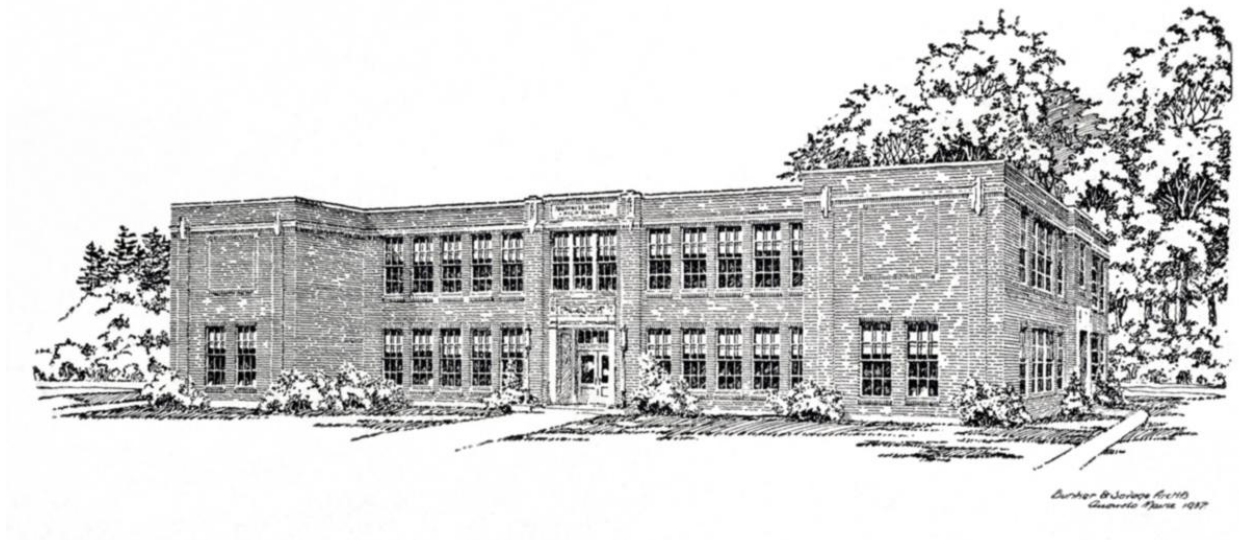


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