

the CASTINE VISITOR

CASTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Fall 2014

vol. 24 no. 3



NOAH BROOKS: BASEBALL HISTORIAN AND PROMOTER

Wendy Knickerbocker

The Castine Historical Society recently purchased a copy of Noah Brooks' 1884 novel, *Our Base Ball Club and How It Won the Championship*.¹ The book was published by E.P. Dutton in two formats, both illustrated with black-and-white woodcuts. The higher-priced edition had cloth covers, with gilt lettering and one of the engravings on the front; the other format had board covers, with unique color illustrations on the front and back. The CHS owns the edition with board covers, and it is an important artifact of baseball history.

Our Base Ball Club was not the first work of baseball fiction. There were at least three earlier works, including Noah Brooks' 1880 book *The Fairport Nine*,² a tale of his boyhood in 1840s Castine. The historical importance of *Our Base Ball Club* lies primarily in its accurate rendering of 19th-century baseball, but the novel also touches on two of the game's social issues, professionalization and gambling.

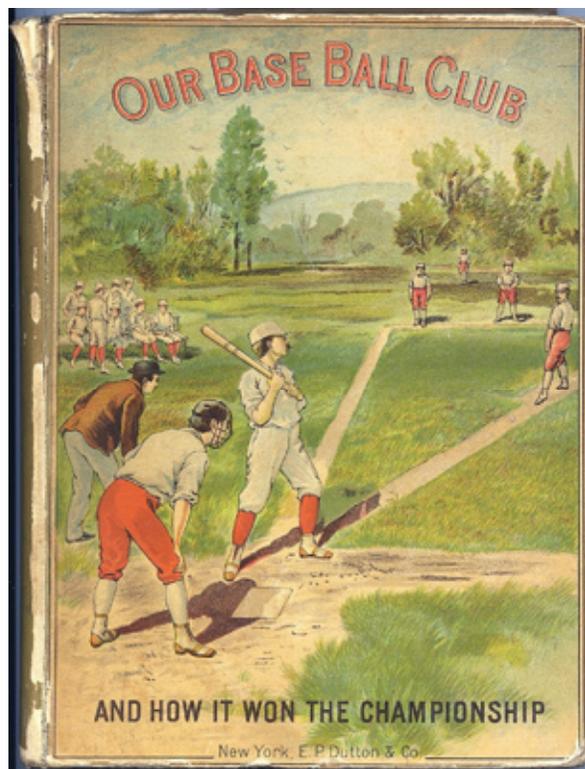
Equally interesting is the fact that a prominent baseball team owner endorsed the book.

Noah Brooks showed in his writings that he was a knowledgeable baseball fan; one advertisement

for *Our Base Ball Club* called him "the laureate of our national game."³ In *Lem, a New England Village Boy*,⁴ his memoir of Castine, Brooks provided both a field sketch and details of 1840s "ball-playing" that are regarded as important depictions of early baseball.⁵ In *The Fairport Nine*, he portrayed the 1840s baseball team of his youth, but he described the actual games using 1880 rules.

In *Our Base Ball Club*, Brooks also used updated rules for early baseball games. On the final page of that book, the narrator says, "All

these things happened years ago." The illustration on the front cover, which shows a game in progress, is strongly reminiscent of a well-known 1866 Currier & Ives lithograph.⁶ While the cover illustration and the



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**The Castine Historical
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In Honor of:

Willard Emery, Jr.

and

Nancy R. Mundth, with thanks
for her gift of flowers
for the Society's exhibits and
events since 1996

and

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**A contribution was received
for the Society's
Hermione 2015 Project**

In Memory of:

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New Members

The Castine Historical Society
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Thank you

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For breaking news from the
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our website at
www.castinehistoricalsociety.org

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

The summer is a pleasant memory and Labor Day has come and gone. Summer visitors have headed home with very pleasant memories of Castine. We hope that CHS has added to the enjoyment of summer 2014 for both visitors and those of us who are fortunate to live full time in Castine.

It has been a busy summer for CHS. The summer exhibit, "Mr. Madison's War: Castine and the War of 1812," was viewed by over 1600 visitors. The Pulliam Lecture on the War of 1812, delivered on August 5th by University of Virginia Professor Alan Taylor, can only be described as a sell-out, with an audience of more than 300.

The guided walking tours of Castine were very popular this summer. There was very valuable help and leadership on the tours provided by Curator Paige Lily, Administrator Sally Chadbourne, and our summer intern Chelsey Cain. Of course none of the CHS activities, including development, management, and docent coverage of the exhibits and various educational activities within the Castine community, would be possible without the dedicated help of volunteers. CHS is a volunteer organization at its core, and we are very fortunate to have such talented and committed volunteers in the Castine community.

Although the summer of 2014 was an exciting one for CHS, prospects are that 2015 will be very exciting also. There are two projects that will reach fruition next year that will draw much attention. First, the completion of the restoration of the Grindle House will occur in the next several months, resulting in a carefully restored 1850s New England house. Along with its historical significance, the reconstructed Grindle House will significantly enhance the CHS mission since it will contain a state-of-the-art, environmentally controlled archive facility for the increasing number of high-value objects in the CHS collection.

The second notable event that will occur in the next year is the arrival of the replica of the 1778 French frigate *Hermione*. This vessel carried Lafayette to Boston in 1780 to assure General Washington of full French military support for the American Revolution. This French support directly resulted in the victory at Yorktown and the establishment of the United States of America. The replica *Hermione* will be sailing to North America next summer to commemorate Lafayette's role and the role of France in American freedom and the establishment of the U.S. The last port of call in the U.S. for *L'Hermione* will be Castine. To further enhance the excitement of *L'Hermione* in Castine, the vessel will arrive on July 14th (Bastille Day). We expect a great many visitors from near and far will come to Castine to see *L'Hermione*. The CHS is now busily planning events around Bastille Day 2015 in Castine.

There is no question that next summer will be exciting in Castine. Plan to be here with us.

John S. Macdonald



The mission of the Castine Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is to collect, preserve, protect, and make available a variety of materials that illuminate the historical development of the Castine-Bagaduce River Area from its beginnings to the present.

The Castine Visitor is published three times a year by the Society for its members and friends.

Wendy Knickerbocker.....Editor

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**Castine
Historical Society**

disclaimer helped Brooks set his story in the 1870s, he narrated the baseball games using 1881-1883 rules and style of play. In order to have his baseball descriptions ring true for his 1880s audiences, Brooks used contemporary rules and playing conditions.

Brooks was a journalist, and in all of his stories he played close attention to physical and historical details. His baseball novel was set in Catalpa, in northern Illinois, “a busy manufacturing and milling community” on both sides of the Stone River. Catalpa could easily be based on Dixon, a northern Illinois mill town on both sides of the Rock River, where Brooks lived in the 1850s. Baseball was increasingly popular in the Midwest after the Civil War, and *Our Base Ball Club* is a reasonably accurate portrayal of life and social conditions in a small Midwestern city in the 1870s.

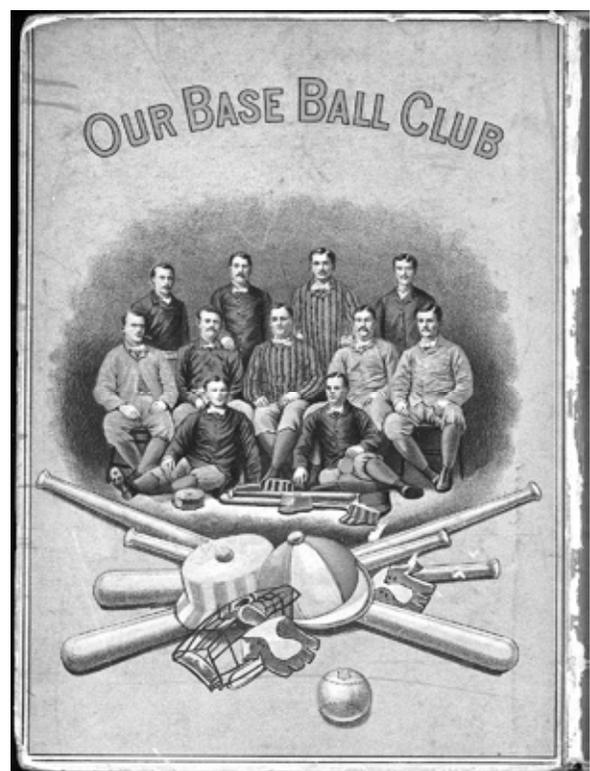
When *Our Base Ball Club* was published in 1884, Brooks had just assumed the editorship of a newspaper in Newark, New Jersey, after ten years with the New York *Tribune* and the *Times*. He regularly contributed articles and stories to popular magazines, and he was nationally known for his friendship with and writings about Abraham Lincoln. For such a prominent literary and social figure as Noah Brooks to write about baseball granted a certain stature to a game that had been an organized professional sport only since 1876.

In pursuit of just such complimentary exposure was the president of baseball’s National League,⁷ Albert G. Spalding. Spalding’s plaque in baseball’s Hall of Fame calls him “the organizational genius of baseball’s pioneer days.” He had been a star pitcher before forming the sporting goods company that still bears his name. In 1882 Spalding became not only the president of the National League but also the owner of its best team, the Chicago White Stockings.⁸ As both National League president and a team owner, he worked hard to promote baseball as respectable middle-class entertainment. While Spalding’s team and business headquarters were in Chicago, the National League’s office was in New York, and A.G. Spalding & Bros. had a branch there. It would have been in New York that Spalding encountered Noah Brooks.

A.G. Spalding wrote the introduction to *Our Base Ball Club*. He said, “It is written by one who is thoroughly well informed of the things concerning which he gives such vivid pictures, and ... I am sure the story will commend itself to every lover of pure and wholesome literature.” In that “wholesome”

story, Noah Brooks portrayed baseball just as Spalding wanted it portrayed: players avoided alcohol; gambling on games was frowned upon; women could safely enjoy coming to the ballpark; and, although it was regrettable, team owners had to pay their players in order to retain talented athletes.

Spalding also advertised and sold *Our Base Ball Club*. The last page of the book is a full-page ad for A.G. Spalding & Bros. At the end there is this item: “We also supply to the trade the Great Base Ball Story, by Noah Brooks, Esq. ... A book of great interest to every base ball player.” Brooks’ detailed descriptions of several baseball games, played by contemporary rules, assured that great interest.



Back cover of *Our Base Ball Club*. A copy of a real photograph, it includes two players enshrined in baseball’s Hall of Fame: Adrian “Cap” Anson (center row, third from the left) and Mike “King” Kelly (center row, last on the right).

There may have been more to Spalding’s interest than public relations and marketing. In his introduction, the baseball magnate wrote that Brooks’ book was “founded on fact and incidentally introducing personages which are not wholly creatures of [the author’s] imagination.” In the late 1860s and early 1870s, Spalding played for a semi-professional baseball team in Rockford, a small industrial city in northern Illinois not unlike Catalpa (or Dixon). There are episodes in *Our Base Ball Club* that are suggestive of events in Spalding’s baseball

career. Perhaps Noah Brooks meant to place the shadow of his famous endorser in his story.

The illustration on the back cover of *Our Base Ball Club* is a portrait of a baseball team. It was copied from an official team photograph of the 1882 Chicago White Stockings, which was Spalding's team. That was the first year Spalding owned the team, and the White Stockings won the National League pennant. Most of the players, including two of baseball's first superstars, were still on the team in 1884, and some of them would have been recognizable to the readers of *Our Base Ball Club*.

With the front cover resembling a popular Currier & Ives print, the back cover bearing the portrait of a real-life winning baseball team, and the introduction written by one of baseball's most important figures, Noah Brooks' novel was an advertisement for the game as well as entertainment for its fans. Whether or not that public relations aspect was intended by its author, the edition of *Our Base Ball Club* with illustrated board covers is an artifact of baseball marketing as well as of baseball

history. Noah Brooks was the author of an important early work of baseball fiction, baseball sociology, and baseball promotion.

1. It was spelled "base ball" in the 1880s.
2. Noah Brooks, *The Fairport Nine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880). The book was later expanded and published as *The Boys of Fairport* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898).
3. "Among the New Holiday Books," *The Book Buyer*, Dec. 1, 1884, 299.
4. Noah Brooks, *Lem, a New England Village Boy: His Adventures and His Mishaps* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901).
5. See Society of American Baseball Research, "Protoball." <http://protoball.org/1840s.31>
6. "The American National Game of Base Ball: Grand match for the championship at the Elysian Fields, Hoboken, N.J."
7. The National League is still the "senior circuit" of Major League Baseball.
8. That team is now the Chicago Cubs.

SAVE THE DATE Tuesday, July 14, 2015

In 1780, the French frigate *Hermione* sailed from France to Boston. Aboard was the Marquis de Lafayette, bringing the assurance of French military support for the American Revolutionary War. After safely delivering Lafayette, the *Hermione* proceeded north to Penobscot Bay on a reconnaissance mission, with the purpose of gaining knowledge about the British occupation at Majabigwaduce (present-day Castine).

A group in France has built a replica of the *Hermione*, and it is now on exhibit in Rochefort. In partnership with the Friends of Hermione-Lafayette in America, and thanks to the vision and determination of both groups, the second *Hermione*



will cross the Atlantic next year. That historically authentic Tall Ship will visit several American ports.

Mark Bastille Day (July 14) on your calendars now! *L'Hermione* is scheduled to land in Castine on that day, and the Castine Historical Society will be the official host of the renowned ship's visit.

For more information on Lafayette's *Hermione* and the 2015 voyage, see the website: www.hermione2015.com

For updates on *L'Hermione's* visit to Castine, sign up on our website:

www.castinehistoricalsociety.org/Hermione
Bastille Day 2015 will be a glorious celebration indeed. See you there!

Successful Summer Programs



Left to right: Abigail Adams (Paige Lilly), Spirit of John Adams (George Bland), Spirit of Abigail Adams (Aynne Ames), John Adams (Ralph Chapman)

This past summer the Castine Historical Society sponsored two events that drew near-capacity audiences. The first was a presentation on July 5th of the first act of “The Tye More Binding,” a play/reading based on the 1762-1776 letters of John and Abigail Adams. Appearing in the production were CHS Curator Paige Lilly as Abigail, and Brooksville resident Ralph Chapman as John. Commenting on their past lives and letters were the “Spirits of Abigail

and John,” portrayed respectively by Aynne Ames, Director of Cold Comfort Productions, and Rev. George Bland, a Castine resident.

Historian Lynn Parsons compiled the letters and wrote the commentary delivered by the “spirits” of the Adamses. The second act, which carries the story of the Adams’s lives and letters from 1776 to 1800, has not yet been performed. Plans are in the works for a presentation of both Act One and Act Two sometime next July.

The second CHS-sponsored event, the sixth annual Deborah Pulliam Lecture, took place on August 5th. Two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Alan Taylor discussed what he called “The Civil War of 1812,” based on his 2009 book of the same title. Dr. Taylor traced the origins of the war to American nationalist resentment against British high-handedness on the oceans, fueled by partisan politics.

When war was declared, Taylor said, the Americans were woefully unequipped for an extended conflict, and their only option was an invasion of “Upper Canada” (now western Ontario). That failed invasion created anti-American resentment throughout Canada, resulting in a new Canadian national identity.

Castine Oral History Videos Available Online



(Photo by Mason Barge)

For several years, the Castine Historical Society has been collecting audiovisual stories of modern, 20th-century Castine. The videos are now available on the Society’s website: castinehistoricalsociety.org/collections/digital-media

These videos capture a diverse selection of memories shared by current and former, year-round and seasonal residents. Many thanks to CHS volunteer Dr. Ken Scheer. Not only has he made this project possible, he also serves as interviewer and videographer. Visit the CHS website often, as more stories will be added in the coming months. Please be in touch if you have suggestions for others to be interviewed. Email: info@castinehistoricalsociety.org

My Bird's-Eye View

Paige Lilly

Work began on the Grindle House restoration and renovation in June 2013, and I soon discovered I would have a bird's-eye view from the Abbott School window only a few feet from my desk. While Buildings and Grounds Committee members were frequently available to document the project, my co-worker, Sally Chadbourne, and I took on the task of photographing developments as they happened.

It has been fascinating to watch the meticulous and highly choreographed process—step by noisy, dusty, hard-working step—that transformed the house and property. In this corner of the newsletter we include seven of the 702 images collected so far. Please be in touch if you would like to make an appointment to scroll through the rest of the images!

As of this writing, CHS plans to move the collections and day-to-day operations into the Grindle House by early November 2014. An open house and tours will be scheduled for early next summer.



Sliding onto the new foundation. September 10, 2013

Please see the back page of the newsletter for an image of the house the day it was moved off its foundation. Here the crew is moving the house back to settle it onto its new foundation. It sits on its original site, about eighteen inches taller than before. For the move, the house was riding on iron I-beams slicked with Ivory Soap and pulled by cables from two winch trucks.

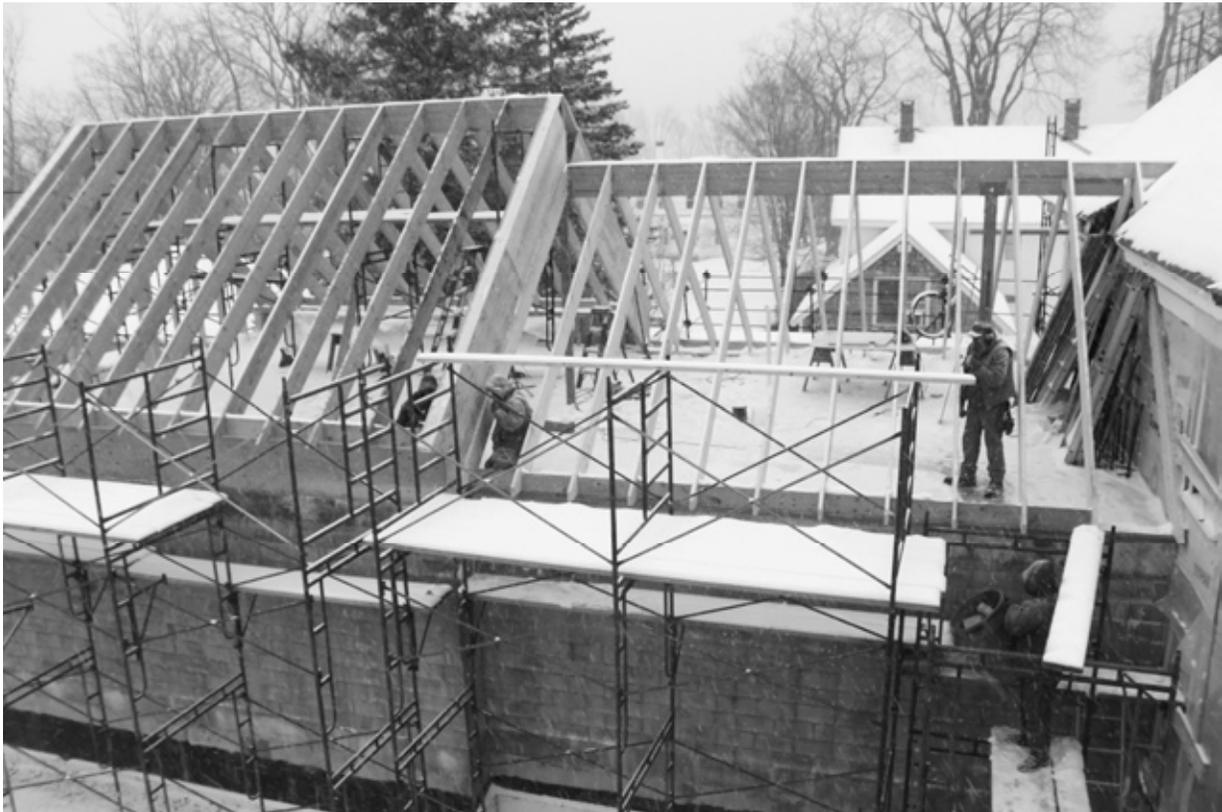


Forms for lower level walls of the archival storage ell. September 20, 2013

These wooden forms surround rebar standing on cement footings. A few days after this shot, two cement mixers and a crew began filling the forms using a pumper truck parked in front of the Grindle House. Almost all of what you see in this picture is below grade.

Winter work. February 5, 2014

The main level of the archival storage ell was built of cinderblocks with a poured cement slab above. Here, in the snow, the E.L. Shea crew is framing the roof for the attic space that now houses the mechanical systems for controlling temperature and humidity in the archival storage spaces. It was unusually cold all winter as the work continued indoors and out.





Above, behind the trim. June 3, 2014

Seeing otherwise hidden features of the project reveal themselves during construction always made me reach for the camera. Newspapers from the 1890s behind the clapboards of the bay window, pipes laid in the crushed rock below the foundation, concrete blocks behind the fake barn door of the ell, and, here, the original boards at the eaves on the gable end of the house.



Top right, fitted with new windows. July 23, 2014

The original windows of the Grindle House were made with six panes over six panes. These new windows, ordered with ultraviolet light-filtering glass, had to be individually adjusted to fit in the old house.

Below, painted clapboards and shutters. September 15, 2014
The functional shutters were installed today and the staging removed soon after. Interior finish work and grading around the house are next on the list.

Below, the CHS "carriage house." June 11, 2014

The faux windows and barn door help to hide the interior, which is simply a two-level concrete box. The "windows" would later be covered with closed green shutters. One year earlier, the carpenters had been dismantling the previous ell, which was approximately half the size of the new ell.



This is the season of thanksgiving and celebration.



Perhaps you wish to honor someone with a gift membership in the Castine Historical Society. Each new or renewed gift membership conveys all the privileges of being a member of the Society, including a subscription to *The Castine Visitor*, published three times a year.



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Clip and mail with your check to Castine Historical Society, P.O. Box 238, Castine, ME 04421, or to pay by credit card contact the CHS Administrator at 207-326-4118 or admin@castinehistoricalsociety.org

Thank you for joining the Castine Historical Society, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Shopping at the Abbott School Gift Shop

The Castine Historical Society Gift Shop is open by appointment (326-4118 or admin@castinehistoricalsociety.org) on weekdays throughout the winter holiday season. CHS members receive a 10 % discount on all Gift Shop purchases. Can't be in Castine this time of year? We would be pleased to ship your selections to you or a gift recipient. Shipping charges will apply, as will 5.5% Maine sales tax (only for purchases made at the store or shipped to a Maine address).

Selected items available for shipping (shipping charges are \$6.00 per order under \$75 and \$10.00 per order \$75 and over):

Castine Artist Ned Coombs Limited Edition Prints Waterfront Village \$30.00 _____ Fisherman's Bend \$30.00 _____	CHS Logo Ball Cap, one size \$18.00 _____ <i>Missions and Meeting Houses, Chapels and Churches</i> book by Lynn Parsons \$19.95 _____
CHS Logo Adult Fleece Half-zip Pullover Adult size S__ M__ L__ \$45.00 _____	CHS Logo Sea Bags, recycled sail cloth totes Small \$95.00 _____ Medium \$115.00 _____ Large \$130.00 _____
CHS Logo Child Fleece Zippered Jacket Child size S __ M__ L__ \$35.00 _____	

Ship to: _____ Item total: \$ _____

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City/State/Zip _____ Shipping _____

To pay by check, mail with this form to CHS, PO Box 238, Castine, ME 04421 (5.5% ME tax) _____

To pay by credit card, call 207-326-4118 or email admin@castinehistoricalsociety.org Total due \$ _____



A Brick in Every Stocking!

This holiday season, give a commemorative brick to that someone special!

Join the hundreds of CHS supporters who have remembered their parents, children, friends, and even pets by purchasing a personalized brick for the Abbott School walkway. This is the perfect gift for the holidays, a great way to support the Society, and a lasting remembrance for future generations.

Please indicate below how you want the brick to look, using up to 12 letters, numbers, and spaces on each of 3 lines.

Line 1 _____

Line 2 _____

Line 3 _____

Recipient's Name and Address _____

Your Name and Address _____

The tax-deductible price for each brick is \$50.00. Make checks payable to Castine Historical Society and mail to P.O. Box 238, Castine, ME 04421. To pay by credit card, call 207-326-4118 or email admin@castinehistoricalsociety.org

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Stepping up to the Common. July 12, 2013

The Grindle House was moved off its foundation by Baxter Cook House & Building Movers of Searsport, Maine, and placed within a few yards of School Street early in the process of restoration and renovation. See other photos in the Curator's Corner inside.