

the CASTINE VISITOR

CASTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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“MR. MADISON’S WAR”:

CASTINE AND THE WAR OF 1812

Lynn H. Parsons, with Sarah (Sally) Foote

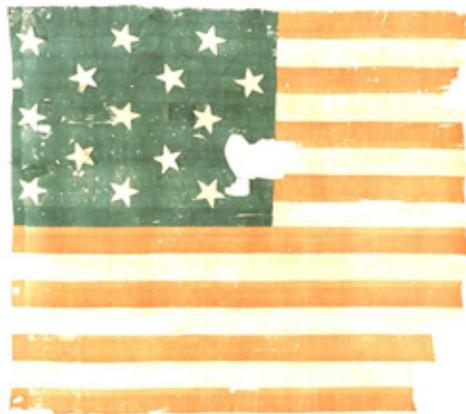
2014. This is the year that Americans will be observing the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812. Why 2014 instead of 2012? Probably because that’s when—at least from the American point of view—the most memorable events connected to the war happened. That’s when the Maryland attorney Francis Scott Key wrote the poem later known as “The Star Spangled Banner.” That’s when the British burned the city of Washington, causing the President of the United States to flee to Virginia along with his wife. That too is when the war ended, although it would not be known on this side of the Atlantic until the following year, 1815.

For Castiners, 1814 was the year of the *second* British occupation of the town. This, as well as the war itself, will be the focus of this summer’s exhibit at the Castine Historical Society: “*Mr. Madison’s War: Castine and the War of 1812*.” Our exhibit will be divided into several parts, ranging from “The Steps to War” to “Postwar Times.” It will

describe both events and personalities in Castine and downeast Maine, as well as the war itself. “Mr. Madison” of course was James Madison, the wartime president of the United States. By attaching his name to the war, its opponents made clear that it was “his” war and not theirs.

From the standpoint of world history, the War of 1812 was a mere sideshow, a small link in a long chain of events involving the struggle between Britain and Napoleonic France. Americans wanted to stay out of the Anglo-French war but at the same time wanted to profit by exporting goods to both sides. They proclaimed themselves a “neutral” nation, entitled to “free trade” on the high seas. Neither Britain nor France recognized any

such neutral “right,” but since France had no real navy, it was the British who more often angered Americans by asserting their alleged right to confiscate merchant vessels headed for the enemy.



This is the flag that flew over Fort McHenry in 1814, inspiring Francis Scott Key’s poem, “The Defence of Fort McHenry,” later known as “The Star-Spangled Banner.” Note the fifteen stars and stripes in the flag, although by 1814 there were actually eighteen states in the Union. The flag is currently on display at the National Museum of American History in Washington.

CASTINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2014 SUMMER EVENTS

Thursday, June 26, 4:00 pm, in the Mitchell Room of the Abbott School
Castine Historical Society Lecture presented by Lynn Hudson Parsons:
“Did Anyone Really Win the War of 1812?”

Sunday, June 29, 4:00-6:00 pm, at the Abbott School on the Common
Opening reception for Castine Historical Society’s summer exhibit:
“*Mr. Madison’s War*”: *Castine and the War of 1812*
Refreshments will be served.

Saturday, July 5, 4:00 pm, at Emerson Hall in Castine
“*The Tye More Binding*”—*Letters of John and Abigail Adams, 1763-1776*
CHS presents the first act of a dramatic reading, featuring Aynne Ames, George Bland, Paige Lilly, and Ralph Chapman. Compiled and edited by Lynn Hudson Parsons.

Saturday, July 26, 10:00 am-4:00 pm and Sunday, July 27, 1:00-4:00 pm
“Touring Through Time,” a collective open house of ten historical organizations of the eastern Penobscot Bay area, including the Castine Historical Society

Monday, July 28, 7:00 pm, location to be announced
Talk on the World War I generation by Richard Rubins, author of *Last of the Doughboys*
Presented by Witherle Memorial Library and co-sponsored by Castine Historical Society. Part of the WML 2014 Maine Writers Series

Wednesday, July 30, 10:00 am-4:00 pm, at the Castine Inn on Main Street
J. McLaughlin Benefit Trunk Show and Sale
A portion of the sales will benefit Castine Historical Society.

Tuesday, August 5, 7:00 pm, at Delano Auditorium on the Maine Maritime Academy campus
Sixth Annual Deborah Pulliam Memorial Lecture
Alan Taylor, PhD, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and author of *The Civil War of 1812*

Wednesday, August 27, 4:00 pm, in the Mitchell Room of the Abbott School
Castine Historical Society Annual Meeting
Short business meeting and illustrated lecture by Gail Caskey Winkler, PhD, FASD:
“What Might the Grindles Have Done?: Finishes in the Formal Rooms of the Samuel P. Grindle House”

SUMMER EXHIBIT: “*Mr. Madison’s War*”: *Castine and the War of 1812*

Early season, June 10-28: Tuesday thru Saturday, 1:00-4:00 pm
Summer season, June 30-Labor Day: Monday thru Saturday, 10:00 am-4:00 pm; Sunday, 1:00-4:00 pm
After Labor Day: hours to be determined

Also on view is the permanent exhibit: *The Penobscot Expedition*

All exhibits and events are free admission and open to the public.

Any changes to the schedule will be posted in the local papers and on the web at www.castinehistoricalsociety.org



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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www.castinehistoricalsociety.org

**Castine
Historical Society**

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

As the summer and its promised warmth and wonderful New England weather approaches, there are two major projects that are keeping us busy at CHS.

The first of these projects is the completion of the restoration of the Grindle House, which is the 1850 vintage New England home directly adjacent to the Abbott School. The Grindle House is undergoing a meticulous historically correct restoration that will result in a lovely addition to the historic Castine Town Common.

As part of the Grindle House project, CHS is fortunate to be able to build a distinctly modern and high-value facility to serve the Society's mission of being a repository of the history of the Castine-Bagaduce River area and an educational resource to bring history to the community. The facility that CHS is building into the Grindle House complex is a state-of-the-art modern archive to house and preserve objects of high historical value. This facility will protect high-value artifacts against fire and other environmental risks. There is an article in this issue of the *Visitor* reporting on the progress of the renovation.

CHS staff and volunteers are overseeing the completion of the restoration of the Grindle House and are also planning for the movement of our collection into the archive area. The preparation of the collection for its move to the Grindle House will require much care and planning and will be overseen by our professional curator, Paige Lilly.

The second major effort occurring at CHS is the preparation of the 2014 summer exhibit. CHS staff and volunteers are working hard on the exhibit, titled "*Mr. Madison's War: Castine and the War of 1812*". The exhibit is shaping up nicely thanks to the hard work of volunteers and staff. We can always use volunteers who wish to serve as docents for the summer exhibit.

The exhibit will be a very interesting look at how a Maine community fared in a war that was far from universally supported. "*Mr. Madison's War: Castine and the War of 1812*" will undoubtedly result in new ways of thinking about and understanding the supposedly settled history of the War of 1812. This summer, CHS hopes to encourage walking tours that will take visitors to see the actual sites important to Castine's role during the war.

As I hope you are able to see from this letter, we are looking forward to an exciting summer at CHS. We always welcome volunteers who are interested in supporting our activities. If you are interested in a CHS membership (for yourself or someone else) or in helping as a docent, please contact us.

John S. Macdonald

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2013-2014**

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**The Castine Historical
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In Memory of

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And in Honor of

Lynn H. Parsons and Anne H.
Parsons

**A contribution was received in
honor of**

Barbara Ann (Day) Murphy

for Castine Historical Society
participation with the Castine
Golf Club on the Fort Gosselin
Project

NEW MEMBERS

The Castine Historical Society
welcomes these new members:

Sharon Biggie

Allan C. Campbell, MD

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

If you have already renewed your membership for the year, we thank you for your continued support of the Castine Historical Society! It's not too late to renew. Payment can be sent to Castine Historical Society, PO Box 238, Castine, ME 04421.

*—From your friends on the
Membership Committee*

Editor's Note: Please feel free to pass along your ideas or requests for articles, along with your comments and suggestions. Contact Wendy Knickerbocker by phone at 326-8205 or email: wknick@myfairpoint.net

For breaking news from the Castine Historical Society, visit our website at www.castinehistoricalsociety.org

and our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CastineHistoricalSociety

Sixth Annual Deborah Pulliam Lecture

The Castine Historical Society's sixth annual Deborah Pulliam Lecture will be delivered at 7:00 pm, Tuesday, August 5, at the Delano Auditorium on the campus of the Maine Maritime Academy. The speaker will be the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Alan Taylor, whose topic will be "The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, and Indian Allies." A native of Maine, Dr. Taylor is a graduate of Colby College and Brandeis University. His book, *Mr. Cooper's Town*, won both the Bancroft Prize and the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1995. In 2010 he published *The Civil War of 1812*, and last year he published *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832*, which won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for history. This fall Dr. Taylor will join

the faculty at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.



Separated Only by Degrees; or, Adventures in Genealogy

June 14 is Harriet Beecher Stowe's birthday. (To be exact, it's her 203rd birthday.) The little woman who wrote the book that started a great war grew up in Litchfield, Connecticut, and she spent the last two decades of her life in Hartford. However, when Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she was living in Brunswick, Maine. In the 1880s, she visited Castine—as well she might, since she had relatives here.

Long before America's first great war, Jacob Perkins (1624-1699/1700) was a farmer and a militia sergeant in Ipswich, Massachusetts. He had been born in England, and he came to Ipswich with his parents and siblings in 1633. Among Jacob Perkins' many children were two sons, Jacob (1662-1705) and Joseph (1674-1726).

Joseph Perkins stayed in Ipswich, but his son Matthew (1713-1773) moved to Norwich, Connecticut. There Matthew Perkins had a son, Enoch (1760-1828), who moved to Hartford. Enoch's son, Thomas Clapp Perkins (1798-1870), married Mary F. Beecher in Hartford. Mary Beecher Perkins' sister was Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Jacob Perkins the younger was a weaver and farmer in Ipswich. His son, also named Jacob (1685-

1770), moved to York, Maine. Among the third Jacob Perkins' several grandchildren who were born in York were John Perkins (1745-1817) and Joseph Perkins (1746-1818). Those first cousins moved to Penobscot/Castine in the years before the Revolutionary War.

John and Joseph Perkins had siblings and cousins who also moved to Penobscot/Castine, and both men had several children. Consequently, both had extensive familial ties in Castine. For example, John Perkins was the grandfather-in-law of Capt. John A. Avery, son of Thatcher Avery; Joseph Perkins was the grandfather-in-law of Dr. Joseph L. Stevens. John Perkins was not only the grandfather-in-law of Capt. Joseph Wescott, Jr., he was also Capt. Wescott's uncle; Joseph Perkins was Capt. Wescott's first cousin, twice removed.

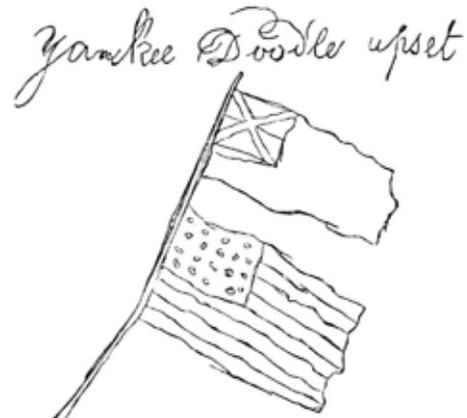
Harriet Beecher Stowe's brother-in-law, Thomas C. Perkins, was the third cousin of both John Perkins and Joseph Perkins. With only a few more degrees of separation, we could show that when Harriet Beecher Stowe visited Castine in the 1880s, she was a distant cousin-in-law of at least half of the town's residents.—WK

The Americans had another problem with the British. His Majesty’s navy, in order to maintain its full strength, had to rely on the harshest of measures. These included the practice of “impressment,” or the forcible recruitment of sailors, wherever they could be found. From the British standpoint, any American born before Independence was still a subject of the king and therefore eligible to be “impressed” into the Royal Navy. Not only that, but a number of British subjects had fled the abysmal conditions in the navy for better conditions in the American merchant marine, and the British wanted those sailors back. After months of clashes and occasional bloodshed on the high seas, matters came to a head with an American declaration of war on June 18, 1812.

The War of 1812 split the nation politically, economically, sectionally, and perhaps culturally. In the first decade of the nineteenth century America’s political leaders were divided. In most of the South and West, the Republican Party, led first by Thomas Jefferson and then by James Madison, was dominant. But in most of New England, as well as in parts of other northern states, the Federalist Party was the stronger.¹ In Federalist New England most people thought that British interference with neutral shipping and the practice of “impressment” were not worth fighting over. For one thing, the profits from transatlantic trade were still worth it in spite of the risks, and for another, although the British occasionally made mistakes in impressing native-born Americans, such incidents were few and far between. Moreover, Anglophile New Englanders tended to sympathize with the British in their struggle against Napoleon.

In Castine, there had always been considerable hostility to both the Madison administration and the Jefferson administration before it. In 1808 Jefferson hit upon the idea of an “embargo” against *all* transatlantic trade, hoping to force either the French or the British to recognize American neutral rights. This did not go down well in

New England, where it was attacked as a war on the commerce states. Critics reversed the spelling of the Embargo Act, referring to it in cartoons as the “ograbme” law. Castine sent a petition to the Massachusetts legislature denouncing the embargo, which, they maintained, was “peculiarly distressing” to them, leading to “idle ships and perishing commodities.”



According to Benson J. Lossing’s “Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812,” a British officer living at the Whitney House on the Castine Common scratched this memento on one of its windows. The original has been lost, but a replica is on display in the CHS summer exhibit.

Things did not get any better once war was declared. No longer merely “distressed,” Castine’s citizens flirted with secession, declaring in January of 1814 that “the time has arrived in which it is incumbent on the People to decide whether these burdens are not too grievous to be borne, and to prepare themselves for the great duty of protecting by their own vigor their inalienable rights.” They would support “whatever measures ... to secure the honor of this ‘Free sovereign and independent State,’ to vindicate her rights, and to protect & defend her citizens in the enjoyment of their property, their liberty, and their lives.”

So it was, that on September 1, 1814, nearly two thousand British troops, under the command of the general Sir John C. Sherbrooke, landed unopposed in Castine. They were accompanied by an armada of seventeen ships of the line and several transports. They would not leave until the following April, four months after the war’s end. As with the military occupation of 1779, Castine’s deep-water

¹ In the early 1800s, “republican” meant merely support of independence, equality before the law, and rejection of monarchies and inherited privilege. “Federalist” originally meant merely support for the Constitution drafted by the Founders in 1787. This is probably what President Jefferson meant in his first inaugural address, when he declared “We are all republicans; we are all federalists.” But republicans and federalists soon began to quarrel over other issues, including the War of 1812.

harbor was believed to be of strategic importance if the British were to hold on to the District of Maine, hoping, as they had in 1779, to break off Maine from the rest of Massachusetts.



Sir John Coape Sherbrooke (1764-1830), commander of the British forces that occupied Castine in September of 1814. This portrait, by Robert Field, hangs in the Halifax Club in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The town of Sherbrooke, Nova Scotia, is named after him.

Yet the occupation of 1814-15 was quite different from that of 1779. Given the town's opposition to the war, relations between the occupiers and the occupied were far less hostile. Residents were required to promise to obey His Majesty's laws, and most agreed to do so. No one seems to have objected when British authorities began collecting customs duties on goods imported into Castine. British officers lodged in a number of Castine homes. They attended services in the town's meeting house. Without much to do, they put on plays and other forms of entertainment for their own—and presumably the townspeople's—entertainment.

Unbeknownst to anyone in Castine, American and British negotiators had been secretly meeting in the neutral Dutch city of Ghent since August. After much wrangling, they reached agreement on Christmas Eve, 1814, to end the war on the basis of *status quo ante bellum* (the state of things before the

war). When the news of peace arrived in February, Congress and President Madison lost no time in ratifying the treaty, but the British hung on in Castine for another two months, departing on April 28, 1815. (They took the customs revenue with them, and three years later it became the basis for establishing Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.)

According to George A. Wheeler's *History of Castine*, "the departure of the British forces from this place, was celebrated by an illumination of the town, which was, doubtless, as brilliant as the lack of gas or coal oil would permit. The houses, most of them, were illuminated by candles stuck into potatoes for candlesticks."

Many historians have delighted in pointing out ironies and contradictions regarding the War of 1812. The most prominent was the odd alignment of sectional opposition and support. The Federalist-dominated commercial areas of New England and the Northeast, who might be expected to be the most vociferous in the defense of "free trade and sailors' rights," were the most hostile to "Mr. Madison's War," while Republican leaders from the agricultural regions of the South and West were the most clamorous in its defense. Critics of the war, both then and later, have pointed out that Britain had repealed many of its more obnoxious practices weeks before war was declared, but the news did not arrive until afterward. Some have maintained that a hidden objective of the war all along was the conquest of Canada and further expulsion of the Indians westward (which would explain the sectional pattern of support). In the end, neither side had budged from its original position on the crucial issues.

The only real American military victory, the Battle of New Orleans, was fought after the war was over, but before that news arrived. Andrew Jackson's decisive defeat of the British on January 8, 1815, gave all Americans the sense of pride and purpose that had been lacking during most of "Mr. Madison's War."

[More on the War of 1812 can be found in the National Park Service's Handbook *The War of 1812*, which will be on sale at the CHS Gift Shop. Among other things, it contains an overview by Dr. Alan Taylor, this year's Deborah Pulliam lecturer.—LHP]

Help Wanted: Summer Exhibit Docents

The summer exhibit at the Castine Historical Society, *“Mr. Madison’s War”*: *Castine and the War of 1812*, opens to the public on Tuesday, June 10. Volunteer docents are needed to keep the exhibit open through the summer and into early fall. It’s fun and educational, and training is available! Please consider volunteering for a 3-hour shift on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly basis, or whatever your schedule allows. Docent training sessions will be scheduled as needed. CHS members and friends interested in serving as a docent should contact Carol Adams at 207-326-9232, or contact CHS via email at info@castinehistoricalsociety.org

Grindle House Update

Roger W. Moss

As most readers of the *Castine Visitor* are aware, the Historical Society owns the Samuel P. Grindle house (c.1850) next to its main building, the Abbott School on the Town Common. In 2011, the CHS directors decided to restore and expand the Grindle House to provide proper facilities for the Society’s growing collections and for office and work spaces for its staff. To assist with that goal, the Society engaged the services of the Camden-based architect Christopher Glass and the Ellsworth building contractor Stephen C. Shea of E. L. Shea, Inc.

After the building had been thoroughly studied, its details recorded for the Historic American Buildings Survey, and the necessary approvals secured from the Town of Castine, work began in the fall of

2013. The Grindle House was moved off its crumbling foundation to allow for the pouring of a secure, reinforced-concrete foundation which was faced with the original foundation stone. With the historic house comfortably settled back in place, work began on a new addition in the form of a traditional two-story, two-stage Maine barn. The walls and floors were constructed of heavily reinforced concrete, to surround a fireproof, high-security, temperature- and humidity-controlled archival storage facility fitted with high-density, mobile shelving that doubles the capacity of normal fixed shelving. (The new concrete “barn” is clad in painted clapboards, blind windows and barn doors so it blends with the architecture of the Common.)



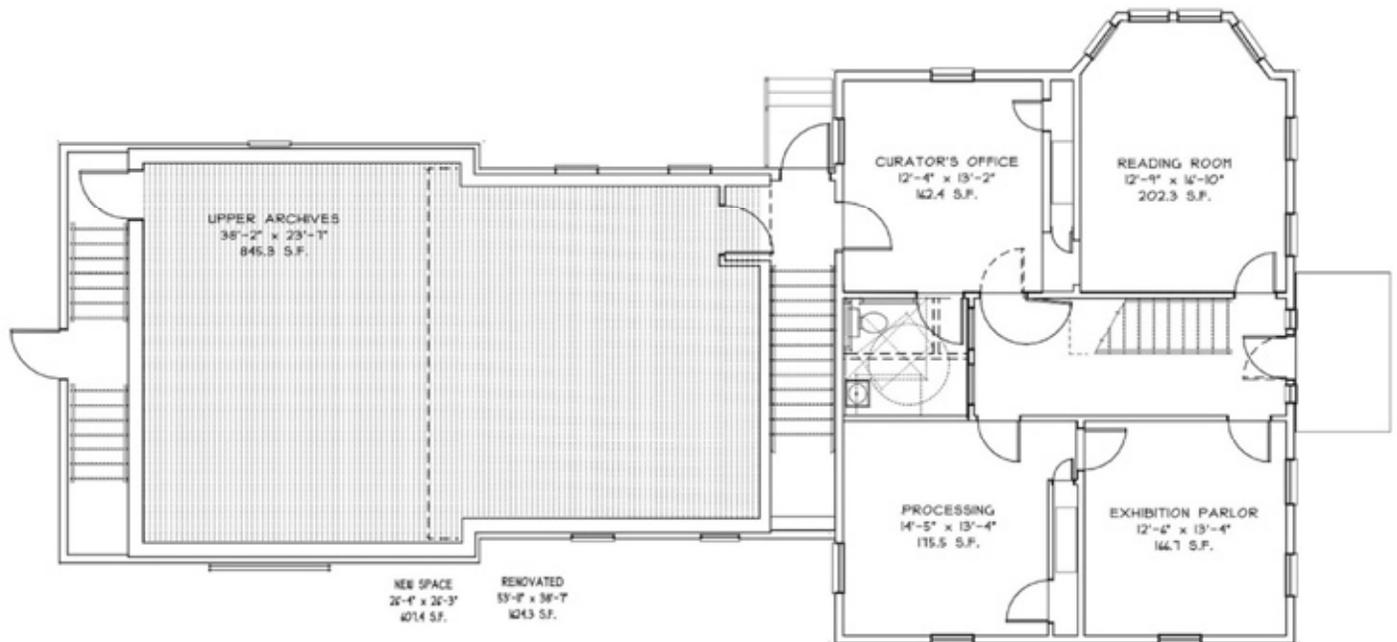
East elevation of the Grindle House and the new “barn” collection storage facility. *Courtesy of Christopher Glass, architect*

Before the snow began to fall, the contractors rebuilt the chimneys, removed all the antiquated heating and electrical systems, and insulated the attic. They also drilled the wells for Castine’s first geothermal heating, ventilating and air conditioning system, which will reduce operating costs and remove the need for a potentially dangerous oil-fired heating system while delivering close-tolerance temperature and humidity conditions to protect and preserve the Society’s collections. The building will also be fitted with an emergency generator and a monitored smoke, fire and security detection system. The result will be one of the finest facilities for the care of rare and fragile collections in downeast Maine.

As the terrible winter of 2013-14 finally released its grip on Castine, the contractors were able to reroof the Grindle House, install insulation and custom-built windows with ultraviolet shielding glass, and replace exterior trim and siding that duplicate the deteriorated originals. The window shutters discarded years ago will also be recreated, the original front door (which had survived in storage) will be rehung,

and the original door surround reproduced. The grounds will be landscaped, new brick walks laid to both the Abbott School and the Grindle House, and handicapped parking and access to both buildings created.

This summer, restoration will begin on the interior. The two-story central hallway, stairway, and the double parlors facing the Common will be finished as they might have been in the mid-nineteenth century, with reproduction carpets, wallpapers, window treatments, and lighting fixtures. One parlor will become the Society’s reading room and the other will be used for small, changing exhibitions. Other rooms on the first and second floors of the historic house will be used for curatorial and administrative staff offices and work spaces. It is now anticipated that the major work will be completed by the fall of 2014 and the staff and collections relocated shortly thereafter. (Watch for updates and the announcement of the formal opening of the Grindle House in future issues of the *Visitor*.)



First floor plan of the Grindle House and the new “barn” collection storage facility. *Courtesy of Christopher Glass, architect*

Let's Put on a Show

Paige Lilly

The lead article for this issue of the *Castine Visitor* describes the subject of this year's exhibit and the many points of controversy involved in the War of 1812. That period in American history has been referred to both as the "second war for independence" and the "first civil war." Once again the CHS Exhibit Committee has chosen a broad and complex story to unfold on the walls of the Abbott School.

When you visit "*Mr. Madison's War*": *Castine and the War of 1812*, you will find maps, paintings, manuscripts, and artifacts which evoke the period and convey the story. Here are a few highlights:

- Portrait of General Gerard Gosselin, commander of the British land forces that occupied and fortified the Castine peninsula from September, 1814, through April, 1815
- News clippings with political cartoons and dozens of contemporary accounts of protests against the war, privateer activity, British attacks, and troop movements
- Maps and diagrams of the position of British fortifications in Castine
- Manuscripts showing the sale of prizes from privateer efforts; safe passage for vessels in British-controlled Penobscot Bay; and pleas for military intervention to take back Castine
- Castine Town Records with resolutions against the embargo and the war
- Photograph and story of a man from Sargentville who was captured and imprisoned at Dartmoor Prison in England
- Portrait of Lucy Perkins Whitney, who had to share her house with three British officers billeted there
- Walrus tusk with scrimshaw proclaiming sailors' rights

As in years past, the show can't go on without the cooperation of lending institutions and individuals. We are grateful for permission to borrow items from several private collections as well as the British Library and National Archives, Maine Historical Society, National Museum of the United States Navy, Nova Scotia Archives and Museum, Penobscot Marine Museum, University of Maine's Fogler Library, and Wilson Museum.

Another organization lending support and effort is our neighbor, the Adams School. Principal and teacher Katie Frothingham brings her seven fifth graders to the Abbott School archives workroom every Monday morning for nearly ninety minutes. Over the course of their first four visits, the students have learned the basics of primary-source research; explored the arguments on all sides of the debate leading up to the War of 1812; and taken on assignments to complete in the preparation of one section of the exhibit.

The proposed end product is the development of several stories of Castine people and places using images and short essays displayed on a map of the town. Sixth grader Chad Davis is creating the map for this section of the exhibit, as part of an independent study assignment he chose to do with the Society.

After the fifth graders complete their research, we will take short field trips to visit the sites connected to Castine's War of 1812 stories. Each student will teach the class the history of the place, on the spot. We hope the students and their families will attend the opening reception for the exhibit on Sunday, June 29, from 4-6 pm, so that we can celebrate the collaboration together.

The Adams School fifth grade class, left to right: Peter Revell, Jakob Ripton, Tony Politano, Syrus Ordway, Madison Colson, Katherine Stanhope, and Amelia Griffith



CHS Appreciates Your Support

We would like to thank all of our members for your generous support of the Castine Historical Society. Including life members, our membership numbers around 650. Each new, renewed, or gift membership conveys all the privileges of being a CHS member, including a subscription to *The Castine Visitor*, published three times a year.

If you have a change of address, either winter or summer, please let us know. It is important that we keep our records accurate, so all members will receive all CHS mailings. Your support is what makes the CHS and its members, near and far, an active part of the Castine Community.

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A portion of the “Sketch of the Position of Castine in the Bay of Penobscot,” drawn in 1815 by Captain Richard H. Bonneycastle, British Royal Engineers. *Courtesy of Nova Scotia Archives*