

## Castine Voters and the Question of Statehood

by Paige Lilly

**2020** marks Maine's bicentennial of statehood!

In July 1819 the District of Maine elected to separate from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and in March 1820 it became official. Maine towns voted six times between 1792 and 1820 in a long struggle on both sides of the statehood question. How did Castine vote?

The story reveals itself within handwritten records of town meetings (stored for the town at the Historical Society) and first-hand accounts from William D. Williamson of Bangor, one of Maine's first Senate presidents and her second governor. He wrote a two-volume chronological history of his state, published in 1832.

The town of Castine incorporated in 1796, and within six months eligible voters were asked to vote on Maine's separation from Massachusetts. They voted resoundingly against the question: one for and thirty-five against (figure 2). Four times Castine's male voting population (figure 3) defeated the question whether to petition the Massachusetts General Council for separation; May 1797, April 1807, September 1816, and May 1819.

Why? Opponents argued that the 1789 federal Act for Registering and Clearing Vessels, Regulating the Coasting Trade, and for Other Purposes by itself was the primary reason not to form a separate state. The law required ship captains carrying cargo along the coast (coasting) to enter a port and clear customs in every state not bordering their home state. Vessels from Massachusetts' District of Maine, for example, shipping goods from Castine to Charleston, South Carolina, could sail as far as New Jersey before entering a port to comply with the law.

Williamson explained the problem, and its solution, in his preface to the political events of 1819:

*Subsequently to the late trial for a Separation [1816], it was fully ascertained, that ship-owners, masters and seamen were opposed to the measure, principally because by a law of Congress, every State was a [Revenue] District;*



*The District of Maine, c1814, attributed to Charles Carey, showing its division into only seven counties at that time; York, Cumberland, Lincoln, Kennebeck [sic], Hancock, Penobscot, and Washington.*

# 2020 Calendar of Events

All events are free and take place in the Castine Historical Society's Abbott School unless otherwise noted. More information: [castinehistoricalsociety.org](http://castinehistoricalsociety.org)

## June 8 – October 12

### **Risky Business: Square-Rigged Ships and Salted Fish.**

This 2020 Maine Bicentennial exhibit invites visitors to step back in time to the 1800s when Castine's working waterfront thrived on a global market.

## Saturday, June 20

### **Open House Reception**

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Join the Historical Society as we kick off the season. View the exhibits and enjoy light refreshments.

## Thursday, July 9

### **The 12th Annual Deborah Pulliam Memorial Lecture**

7:00 p.m.

Noted maritime historian and author Lincoln Paine will deliver a lecture entitled, "Perfected Visions of the Past: Maritime Maine in 2020 Hindsight." Delano Auditorium, Leavitt Hall on the campus of Maine Maritime Academy, Castine.

## July 11 – August 29

### **Saturday Walking Tours of Castine**

10:00 a.m.

Meet your guide in front of the Abbott School gallery to take an hour-long history tour. Tours at other times may be arranged with advance notice and subject to guide availability.

## Friday, July 17

### **A Concert of Music to Celebrate Maine's Bicentennial**

6:00 p.m.

The Castine Town Band's concert on the Town Common is sponsored by the Castine Historical Society. The Historical Society's exhibits will be open at 5:00 for attendees to enjoy prior to the concert.

## Tuesday, August 4

### **Maine's Mid-Century Moment: Castine's Katharine Butler Hathaway, Author of *The Little Locksmith***

7:00 p.m.

UMA Professor of English Lisa Botshon will moderate a discussion on Castine resident Katharine Butler Hathaway's best selling 1943 memoir *The Little Locksmith*. Chris Austin, Hathaway's grand nephew, and Dr. Abby Clouse-Radigan will provide context for Hathaway's life and work. This program is sponsored in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Mitchell Room of the Abbott School.

## Thursday, August 6

### **Maritime Music Concert with Castlebay**

7:00 p.m.

An evening of traditional Maine seafaring songs will be performed by Castlebay, including those written by 19th century Castine sailor Amos Hanson. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Castine at 86 Court St.

## Thursday, August 20

### **Annual Meeting and Program**

4:00 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Following a brief business meeting, Maine Maritime Academy professor, Captain Richard F. Miller, will present a talk entitled "The Square-Rigged Ship: Form & Function – Then and Now." Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Castine at 86 Court St.

### **Abbott School Exhibits (17 School Street)**

June 8 – September 7

Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Sun. 1 – 4 p.m.

September 11 – October 12

Fri., Sat., and Mon. 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Sun. 1 – 4 p.m.

### **Risky Business: Square-Rigged Ships and Salted Fish**

### **Penobscot Expedition 1779: Making Revolutionary History**

### **The Castine Community Bicentennial Quilt**

### **Grindle House Exhibits (13 School St)**

Open July – August

Tuesday and Thursday

2 – 4 p.m.

Reading Room and Exhibit Parlor with *More Risky Business* featuring maritime art and stories.

### **Virtual History Tour of Castine**

To download the app or access the web version of the tour, visit [castinehistoricalsociety.org](http://castinehistoricalsociety.org). Go to the "Visit" drop down button and click on Castine Virtual Tour.

We seek to invigorate our community through collaborative exploration and stewardship of our region's rich history, engaging residents and visitors of all ages in Castine's extraordinary past and, through it, that of New England and North America.

*The Castine Visitor is published three times a year by the Castine Historical Society as a benefit of membership.*

Karen V. Lyons, Editor



## Executive Director's Letter

# A View From The Common

*What* a difference a few days have made in our tiny town of Castine as well as throughout our nation. The spring issue of *The Castine Visitor* was about to go to press when news broke that Castine schools were closing and Governor Mills asked all employees who could to work from home. Knowing that there were many changes afoot for our season, I asked our printer to delay so we could update our members in a timely fashion.

First and foremost during this difficult time, know that we are thinking of you all scattered across the country and world. You are in our thoughts as we work together to craft ways to cope and move forward as an institution, community, and nation.

With that in mind, we want to update you on the difficult decision that the Board of Directors made concerning this year's House and Garden Tour scheduled for July 23. We are postponing the House and Garden Tour to the summer of 2021. You can read more about the decision on page 4 of the newsletter.

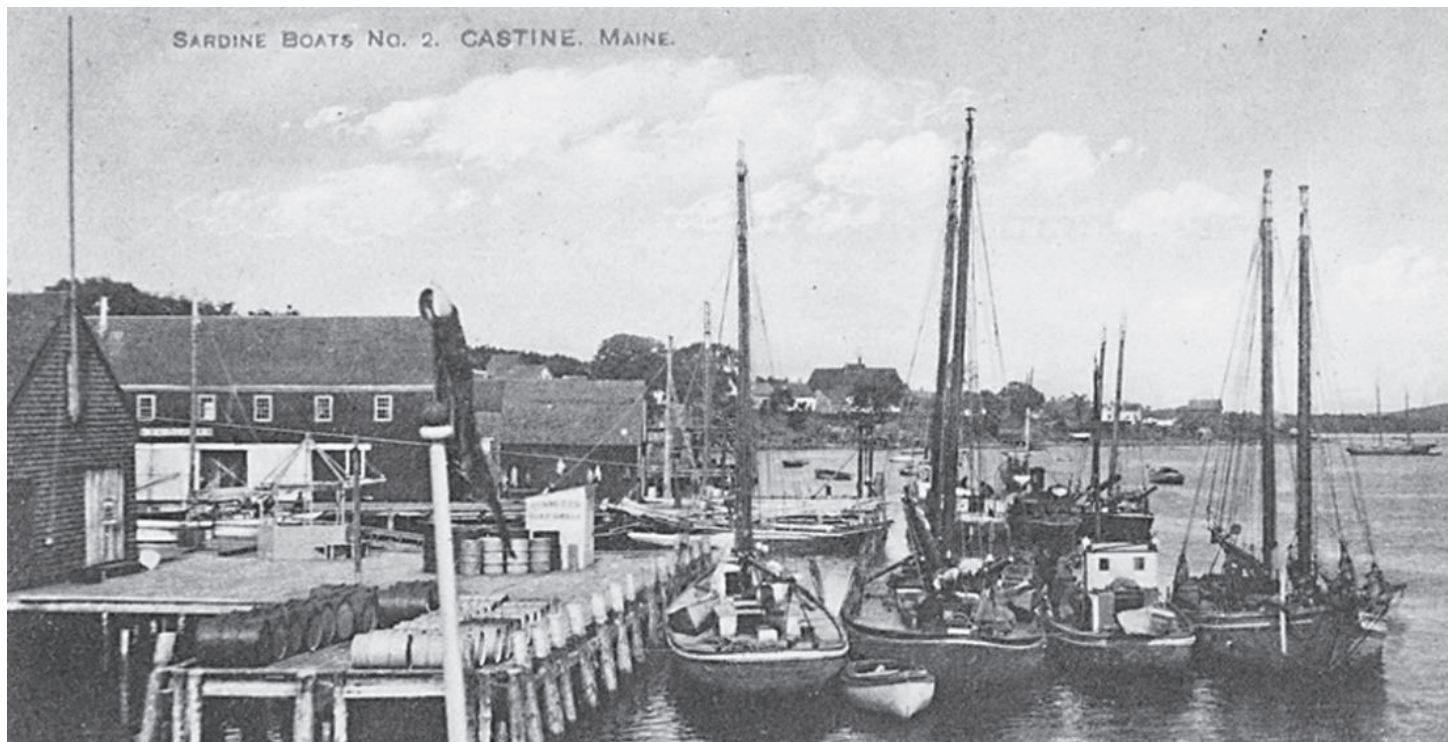
We want you to also know that the staff and Board of Directors continue working on our 2020 projects. The offices are closed to visitors, and staff are working from home with occasional onsite work. We are available via email at [admin@castinehistoricalsociety.org](mailto:admin@castinehistoricalsociety.org) or by calling the staff offices at 207-326-4118. We check phone messages daily. During this



time we will continue to look for creative ways to bring Castine's history to the public and will be exploring all options.

We are grateful to you, our members, for your steadfast support especially during this time of uncertainty. This is a very fluid situation, so we will keep you and the community apprised of future plans for the 2020 season.

Castine has persevered for hundreds of years through war, disease, and natural disasters. This will become another significant chapter in our history, and we will make it through together. We thank you for your continued support and wish you the best in the coming weeks.





# Castine House and Garden Tour 2020

**Postponed Until July 2021**

*A* the March Board of Directors meeting the Board made the difficult decision to postpone the Castine House and Garden Tour until July 2021.

As you can imagine, this was a momentous decision as plans were well underway for the event. However, since we don't have a crystal ball that can tell us what July will look like, the Historical Society believes it is important to take this step as the House and Garden Tour is a large-scale event which brings hundreds of people to Castine. The Board made the decision to keep our members, the homeowners, and the Castine community safe.

We are grateful for the hard work and leadership of our co-chairs, Ruth Scheer and Lynne Dearborn. We are so pleased that they will continue in this role for 2021. We also wish to thank the homeowners for their understanding. To our patrons, sponsors, and business donors we also give a big thank you. Most importantly, to our over 100 volunteers who were poised to launch the event, we say a big thank you as well.

Your support, combined with the collective energy of our volunteers, will create a welcome and jubilant event next summer.

## Views from past House and Garden Tours





# House and Garden Tours of Yesterday

by Angela Bonacasa

“It has been said that for sheer romance out of the past few Maine localities could hold a candle to Castine. . . . The hundreds of visitors who had come to the town for Open Homes Day were served delicious, home-made cookies, dainty sandwiches and tea by fair young maidens in pretty summer attire. It was a lovely scene and one long to be remembered.”

– Myrtle R. Stacy, *New England Fireside*, July 1966

EDITOR'S NOTE: Even though we have postponed the Castine House and Garden Tour until 2021, we hope you will enjoy this history of tours in Castine.

As the Castine Historical Society prepares for its sixth House and Garden Tour, thinking about previous tours and how they have become such an integral part of Castine's history is only natural. They may have had different names and have been sponsored by different organizations, but their purpose has always been to share Castine's rich history with residents and the public alike.

A 1921 article in the Lewiston Journal tells the reader, “In her delightful story of old Castine, given at the Thursday evening session of the Maine Federation of Women's clubs, Mrs. Mary Dunbar Devereux gave an intimate glimpse into the famous old colonial homes of this beautiful town.” While this probably was not the first time that an event like this took place, it is a nice example of how the House and Garden Tour might have come into being: Prominent members of Castine, with a deep knowledge of their town and its beautiful homes, served as a direct resource of history and personal anecdotes about Castine's development. While early examples did not include direct access to personal homes, homeowners did often gather artifacts and artwork to display in a central location in town in order to share their home's history with others.

An example of early 20th century tours was the sixth annual “Castine Woman's Club Day,” which took place on August 6, 1924. In addition to a garden party with tea, a dance exhibition, and a community sing at the town hall, The Abbott, the Hezekiah Williams, and the Whitney houses were open to the public. The Castine Woman's Club sponsored these events in multiple years, including their Open Homes Days in 1950, 1952 and 1966; a tea



Samuel Adams House, 2016 Tour

and access to homes were always included as part of the day.

The Castine Scientific Society (The Wilson Museum) sponsored their Castine Open Home Day on July 22, 1971, with proceeds going toward the continued restoration of the recently purchased Perkins House. This particular open home day included the Wiswall and LaFlamme houses and the Trinitarian and Unitarian churches, as well as the garden of Dr. Alice North. An additional luncheon was also offered.



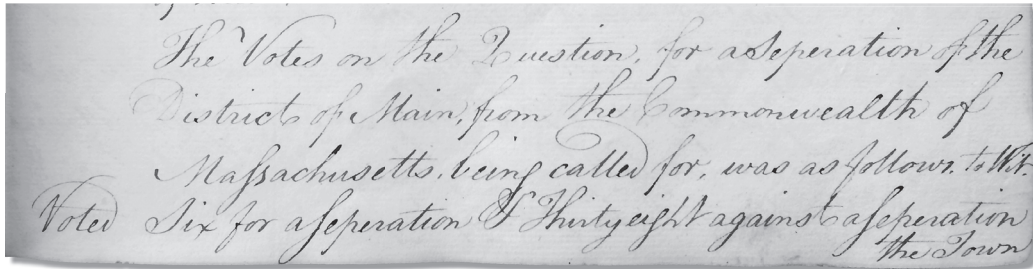
The Castine Historical Society took the reins with its first two “House and Garden Tours” in 1994 and 1998 respectively, under the supervision of chair Marilyn Ashley, with income going toward the Abbott School building fund. The Parson Mason and Doty Little houses and the Dyce's Head Lighthouse were available to the public, along with several gardens. Chairs Ruth Scheer and Lynne Dearborn took up the mantle in 2004, and ran highly successful tours in 2004, 2010, and 2016. They also serve as chairs for the 2020 tour as we continue this delightful tradition in conjunction with the Castine Bicentennial celebration.

While these tours focus outward to bring Castine's history to the public, to talk about them without a special mention of all the community volunteers who have participated is impossible. An entire article would be necessary to list them all. It is a passion for Castine's history, and particularly the stories of these homes and gardens, that excites

the tour hostesses and volunteers. From the early Castine Woman's Club Open Home Days to the Castine Historical Society, this love for Castine and its unique place in history make these events continue to grow and thrive.

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## Castine Voters and the Question of Statehood



The Votes on the Question, for a Separation of the District of Maine, from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, being called for, was as follows. to Wit. Voted Six for a Separation & Thirty eight against a Separation the Town

fig. 2: Record of the vote  
May 10, 1797 shortly after Castine  
was incorporated as a town.  
Castine Town Record Book 1, p. 43

and there fore if Maine were erected into a State, each coasting vessel must enter and clear, every trip made to and from Boston. To obviate this objection, the law was modified, March 2d, 1819, so that 'the seacoast and navigable rivers of the United States,' were divided into two great Districts; and the southern limits of Georgia made the partition line. (pp. 671-2)

Castine's principal industries were fisheries, supplying gear and goods for offshore fishing, shipbuilding, and shipping salted fish and other goods by water along the Atlantic seaboard and beyond. Indeed, villages all along Maine's coast and rivers depended on water-borne trade with other states and cities, especially with Boston.

Becoming a separate state, then, would have significant economic impact on Maine's working waterfronts and commerce. Every trip would be more costly if slowed by entering a port of registry in every state beyond New Hampshire. The attendant expenses would trickle down to increase the cost of goods for nearly every business and family in the state. Opponents to statehood noted that inland farming residents produced many of the goods shipped to Boston and all relied on the products shipped back from Boston in return.

The voting records show Castine overwhelmingly opposed to statehood until after the changes in the federal law removed the economic argument in March 1819. The polling that May finally showed the movement for separation gaining traction in Castine with 18 for and 31 against a warrant to petition the Massachusetts General Council to proceed with a vote on the question of statehood for the District of Maine.

Enough Maine towns did vote in favor of a petition that the legislators in Boston directed all towns to meet on the fourth Monday in July to vote on the question:

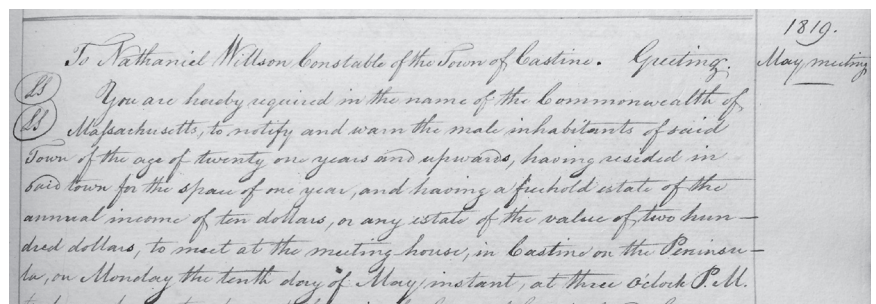
Is it expedient that the District shall become a separate and Independent State, upon the terms and conditions provided in "An act relating to the Separation of the District of Maine from Massachusetts proper, and forming the same into a Separate and Independent State." (Williamson p. 673)

Castine finally answered in the affirmative with 43 for and 35 against. After the new Maine constitution was ratified by a large majority of towns including Castine, the Governor of Massachusetts commemorated the event with a speech to the General Council. Williamson recorded the speech in his account of Maine history for early 1820:

Gov. Brooks... [stated] that the connexion [sic] between Massachusetts and Maine, had commenced at an early period of our History... But 'the time of separation,' added he, 'is at hand. Conformably to the memorable Act of June 19th last, the 15th of March next, will terminate forever, the political unity of Massachusetts proper and the District of Maine: and that District, which is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, will assume her rank as an Independent State, in the American Confederacy. (pp. 674-5).

Williamson described the Congressional action necessary to admit Maine into the union as a state. He briefly mentioned the "obstacles thrown in the way of our Independence" when the national struggle over slavery became the focus of debate on a bill to admit both Maine and Missouri. The debate, according to Williamson, lasted:

... till the first of March, when to our joy... on the 3d of the month, an act was passed, by which **Maine was declared to be, from and after the 15th of that month, one of the United States of America, admitted in all respects whatever, on an equal footing with the original States.** (p. 675)



To Nathaniel Wilson Constable of the Town of Castine. Greeting,  
1819.  
May meeting  
You are hereby required in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to notify and warn the male inhabitants of said Town of the age of twenty one years and upwards, having resided in said town for the space of one year, and having a freehold estate of the annual income of ten dollars, or any estate of the value of two hundred dollars, to meet at the meeting house, in Castine on the Peninsula, on Monday the tenth day of May, instant, at three o'clock P.M. to give a ballot to determine if the District of Maine shall become a separate and Independent State.

fig. 3: What made a man eligible to vote in matters of national interest such as the selection of senators and statehood? "The age of twenty one years and upwards, having resided in said town [Castine] for the span of one year, and having a freehold estate [property] of the annual income of ten dollars, or any estate of the value of two hundred dollars." Castine Town Record Book 1, May 20, 1816, p. 235

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**The Perkins/Ives/Lowell House**

Exactly when this house was built is a mystery. Stylistically it appears to date from c. 1810 as its architectural style is Federal. Its earliest property owner was Joseph Perkins, although it is unclear if he built a house on the site. The first homeowner we know of for sure was the Reverend Alfred Ives who purchased the house in 1855. Ives was the minister of the Trinitarian Parish Church from 1855-1878. The most notable owners of the property were the poet Robert Lowell (1917-1977) and his wife, also an author, Elizabeth Hardwick (1916-2007) who used the home as a summer retreat. It was purchased in 1974 by Castine Historical Society members Ruth and Ken Scheer. There were three interim owners from 1985 to 2005 when the home was "bought back into the family" by the Scheer's daughter and son-in-law, Stefanie Scheer Young and Andrew Young. The Lowell Home is just one of the homes that will be on the newly rescheduled House and Garden Tour in 2021.