

Point park

The new beach access area in Pine Point has been completed after a year of work. The area, known as Snowberry Ocean View Park in honor of an amusement park that once stood next to the Lighthouse Inn, includes a new walkway, wood-framed seating area, water fountain, bicycle rack, split-rail fence, sidewalks, crosswalks and narrower traffic lanes to allow visitors better access to the beach. Last week Community Services added the finishing touch to the new park with a sign outside the entrance.



(Courtesy image)



(Dan Aceto photo)

Town is rich in village history

First in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: Pine Point.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

When the town of Scarborough celebrated its 350th anniversary in 2008, Bruce Thurlow wasted no time preparing for the next big celebration.

Inspired by a book that chronicled the town's history, "Scarborough at 350: Linking the Past to the Present," Thurlow embarked on a yearlong project to preserve memories he and other residents shared growing up in the town's many villages. Thurlow said he took on the project so others might enjoy and learn from their experiences at the next landmark birthday event.

This spring, with help from fellow resident Mary Pickard of the Scarborough Historical Society, Thurlow completed his journey back in time by recording group interviews with residents who grew up in the villages of Pine Point, Prouts Neck, Oak Hill, Pleasant Hill, Blue Point, Higgins Beach, Spurwink, North Scarborough and Dunstan.

More than 40 residents shared their photographs, memories and insight of the town's development and life from the 1930s to today.

"I had the idea that 50 to 100 years from now people may do another birthday party and I wanted something that could be accessed easily, with people talking comfortably about these years when

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Villages

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Scarborough really became Scarborough," said Thurlow, who grew up in Pine Point. "I felt like a Huck Fin growing up and I think that's true for a lot of folks living in different areas back then and my reason for leaving this legacy is just that – because we lived it."

Although the villages may have been miles apart, Thurlow and Pickard were amazed by the many similarities residents shared growing up.

"One of the biggest things is that people felt they had more freedom," Pickard said. "If a child went to a house, that mother or father was their mother or father. Houses were never locked up, there were always keys in a car and other parents even felt free to discipline other children."

Thurlow said many of the villages were localized because they were separated by the marsh and transportation was

impractical on a regular basis.

He said many residents remembered the day-to-day adventures of growing up, such as playing familiar games or having to walk or occasionally hitchhike long distances to school. Surprisingly, there were even small gangs, Thurlow said.

"It was not uncommon for us 'crickers' to have a gang to deal with the 'hillier' people living in Blue Point," Thurlow said with a laugh. Thurlow said there was no road in the 1930s, but a hill separated the two villages and they were constant rivals.

For many, life was simpler with fewer distractions than today, Pickard said.

"One of other themes was that everyone said they were 'poorish,' but had a lot of fun," Pickard said. "Although they may have been poor they didn't know because life was rich in neighborhood relationships and they always had something to eat."

Another topic of interest was the different jobs children held. They joined nearly 300

clammers at Pine Point and worked in the budding tourist industry at Prouts Neck and other villages.

"A lot of people used to come by train to resorts in Pine Point, Higgins, Prouts Neck," Pickard said. "They would get off, arrive for summer and be met with horse-drawn carriages."

Many residents remembered the vast amount of farmland and the dramatic change brought about by housing developments, Interstate 295 and increased tourism.

"The roadways really opened Scarborough," Pickard said. "Some residents estimated that 90 percent of the farms became housing developments."

Pickard said she and Thurlow became interested in the villages in part through a 2009 grant from the Maine Community Heritage Project that included a \$7,500 stipend for equipment at the historical society. The grant allowed the historical

society to archive information online about prominent people and places around town and members worked with the library to help gifted and talented students study town history.

"The experience has been very successful up to this point," Pickard said.

Although a lot has changed in Scarborough the past 80 years, memories are as clear as day for those who lived in the 1930s, said Thurlow.

"The thing that was great about being in the audience, was that we would have three to six people in a group who would come in and chat with us and we would ask one or two questions and then they would just take off and talk about growing up," Thurlow said. "We wanted them to pretend they were just sitting around the kitchen table and talking."

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Clams were core of Pine Point community

First in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: Blue Point.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

For Don Googins and other residents of Scarborough who grew up in Pine Point during the 1930s, clamming wasn't just a summertime activity. It was a way of life.

"Boys were born with a clam rake in their hand and girls with a knife for cutting clams," Googins said.

Earlier this year, Googins, along with fellow Pine Point residents, Lenny Douglass, William Bayley and Bruce Thurlow, shared their memories growing up in the seaside section of town for an archival interview that chronicles the history of Scarborough's villages from the 1930s.

The project was spearheaded by residents Thurlow and Mary Pickard, volunteers at the Historical Society, so others could look back on the time "when Scarborough



At left, a 1951 photo of Pine Point Pier. The construction, right, of a new pier will be completed in June at Pine Point. (Courtesy photo/Dan Aceto photo)

became Scarborough."

If you ask any resident, they'll tell you Scarborough's history begins with the snap and crack of a clamshell.

"Pine Point was basically a cottage industry of



clamming," Thurlow said. "Almost everybody down there cut clams."

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And that meant everyone.
“As kids, I remember we’d have a barrel of clams that we would have to cut and shell before we’d go out and play,” Douglass said.

Although opening a clam with a knife may seem like a dangerous task for youngsters, it was customary for children to be involved in the day-to-day activity, including helping knit “heads” or small wooden planks for lobster traps.

Many young Pine Point residents, including Googins, even turned a good profit.

“Growing up that’s how we made money. I remember I had about \$1,500,” Googins said.

The industry was such a fabric of the community, Googins said, that even local factories such as Snow’s and Thurston and Bayley’s regularly employed residents to shuck clams in their own homes.

“We didn’t have Social Security back then, but everybody could cut clams at home for extra added income,” Googins said. “We had a big tray in the kitchen and we would all go out and cut clams and throw the clamshells in the avenue. If I had to make an estimate, I’d say every other house was cutting clams.”

Snow’s, one of the largest factories in Pine Point for processing clams, was built in 1921 and nationally distributed “Scarboro” clams in chowders, pickled or “soused” and other varieties. Luckily the product wasn’t very hard to sell.

“The soft-shell clam was very, very famous for a long time,” Thurlow said. “My father used to say there would be no Pine

“It’s sad how much it’s changed, but I remember all the great times I had growing up.”

– Bruce Thurlow

Point if it weren’t for clam shells.”

Though the flats were primarily used for digging, Thurlow said also they served another purpose.

“At low tide it was a source of income, at high tide it was a source of swimming,” Thurlow said with a laugh.

Although clamming used to be a vital commercial industry for Pine Point, Thurlow said the tide has changed.

“What used to be is not true anymore,” Thurlow said. “Now there are very few diggers and only certain sections are open. In the old days, that was not true at all. You could dig anywhere and you could even dig without a license.”

Thurlow said stricter state regulations and sanctions on where people could dig and cut clams caused the industry to gradually decline in the late 1960s and 1970s. By the 1980s and 1990s, the industry was a shadow of its former self, said Thurlow.

“It’s sad how much it’s changed, but I remember all the great times I had growing up,” Thurlow said.

And just like the many clamshells scattered along the banks of its shores, memories of Pine Point are equally



Mary Pickard and Bruce Thurlow interviewed residents of Scarborough from the different villages in town. Thurlow, who grew up in Pine Point during the 1930s said he decided to do the project so the town would be able to look back on the recorded interviews at its next landmark birthday celebration. (Dan Aceto photo)

bountiful.

From fishing and ice-skating at Kennis Pool to movies and other recreational activities at the local fire barn, many residents enjoyed social gatherings afforded by the quaint neighborhood.

Pine Point’s children were educated at a one-room schoolhouse, another defining characteristic of the village.

Originally built on land next to the fire

station, the schoolhouse served the needs of all children in the area with one teacher for about 50 students. Many students assisted the teacher with basic tasks such as helping mimeograph documents and other less glamorous jobs, such as cleaning the outhouse.

While some of the students’ duties were

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less than glamorous, the view at the school was to die for, Thurlow said. "It looked right out on the ocean, talk about being distracted."

For many, the commute to school, was made even easier by an alternate route through the woods, known as "the rabbit run."

Life changed with a paved road and increased transportation in the 1950s, and children soon were bused to Blue Point School.

During World War II, American troops also constructed trenches along the beach of Pine Point.

"Every night we had to be in before 5, and all the soldiers would patrol the beach with German shepherd dogs," Googins said.

In the years after the war, the trenches would be used for a very different purpose.

"We used to build huts and make a little clubhouse out of it," Bayley said.

Bayley will never forget returning home during a particularly violent storm and passing the Ocean Spray Motel.

"I heard a horrific noise and I looked out at that big three-story motel. The roof came right off and landed in the parking lot," Bailey said. "I ran over thinking I'll go over help somebody, but nobody was hurt."

Another form of supplemental income for residents was renting space in their homes to visitors Thurlow said.

"It was common for people to come up in the summer and stay with a family," Thurlow said.

Before World War II, many local residents and visitors also frequented popular shore dinner houses for affordable seaside meals at popular places such as



Snow's Clam Bake Dinners as it stood in 1924. Snow's factory, built in 1921, was a major distributor of the famous "Scarboro clam."
(Courtesy photo)

the Pillsbury House, Waldren Hotel and other local favorites, he said.

As the automobile industry slowly began to replace trains, visitors stopped lodging at residents' homes and traveled to different areas.

For Thurlow, the greatest change at Pine Point has been the loss of community he and others felt growing up in what was once a fairly remote area of town.

"Pine Point now has become sort of a resort area. It's very expensive and a lot of people that used to live there can't anymore," Thurlow said. "Many people that live in Pine Point are in business or tourists that come to motels. And what we have now is that people don't necessarily know each other. The changes from back then to today are good not bad, but the quaintness is not there."

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Don Googins and his son Dana proudly display their catch after coming back from a clamming expedition in the 1970s. (Courtesy photo)

Proud of their 'Hiller' heritage

Residents of Blue Point share stories of the village

Second in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: Dunstan.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

They were known as 'Hillers,' and in the village of Blue Point during the 1930s, they meant business.

"When I was a little kid you didn't go to the crick (Pine Point) without a gang, and the crick people didn't come to the hill without a gang," Lenny Douglass said.

It wouldn't take long however, before a strong sense of community would develop between the once rival villages.

This year, Douglass, and fellow Scarborough residents, Tim Downs and Kirk Barrett, recounted memories growing up in Blue Point for an archival interview that focused on the different villages that make up the town of Scarborough.

The project was spearheaded by Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of the Scarborough Historical Society, as a means of chronicling life from the 1930s to

the present and give residents a historical reference look back upon at the town's next landmark birthday celebration.

Although they may have had their differences at times, the villages of Blue Point and Pine Point were unified by one thing – the firehouse.

"That was the thing that melded us together, both the adults and the kids," Douglass said.

Built in 1914 on Pine Point, the firehouse served the entire town of Scarborough and relied on local volunteers to help protect the community. Because many residents of Blue Point and Pine Point were involved in the clamming industry, many of those who heeded the call of duty were local clam diggers who worked during winter at Snow's Factory to help can and distribute clams. The firehouse and factory helped bring the villages together in a very unique way.

"There was a whistle built at the factory that signaled the workers where to go in an emergency," Thurlow said. "It operated on the steam that made the food and it became a way of integrating the guys at Pine Point and Blue Point."

For many, that sense of community brought on by the clamming industry was

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Helen Perley, second from right, displays her circus of mice to a group of children. Perley, who lived on Seaveys Landing Road in Blue Point, bred white mice and other small animals nationally for use in laboratories. (Courtesy photo)

Blue Point

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instilled at a very young age.

"I started digging clams at 6 and then commercially when I was 12," Barrett said. "We'd have barrels of them in the cellar where we would cut them."

Downs agreed and said many area youth wouldn't wait long before spending their earnings.

"I grew up digging clams," Downs said. "We dug clams during the day and then partied at Old Orchard Beach at night. Everybody cruised the strip with old cars. It was like the movie, 'American Graffiti,' that's exactly the way it was."

There was another way for local youth to earn money, however, and it was something a bit more bizarre.

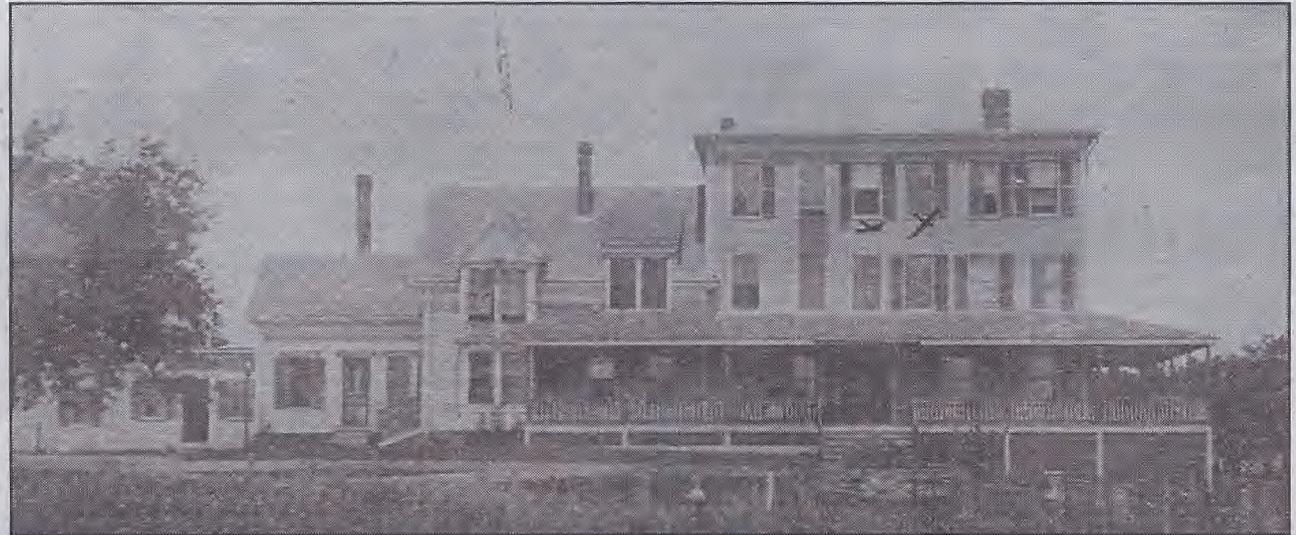
"Back then we did whatever we could to make money," Downs said. "We'd sell all kinds of animals and snakes to Helen Perley," Downs said.

Perley, who lived off Seavey's Landing Road in Blue Point, bought, sold and bred mice and other animals to be used in testing laboratories nationwide, including Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor. When children would come across anything slithering, slimy or just downright odd, they knew it would have a safe, or relatively secure, home at Perley's White Animal Farm.

And what was the going rate for a fresh catch? Why, 15 cents per inch of course.

Perley got her start in the business after her son brought home two white rats as house pets. For "company," Perley bought two female rats and "soon the brood grew to be over 10,000," according to a book entitled "Mrs. Perley's Peoples." At her peak in the 1950s, Perley harbored more than 33,000 animals at her home in Blue Point, including her favorite, a skunk, which she learned how keep as a pet.

With more than 30,000 animals, Perley needed all the



A postcard of the Lookaway Inn in Blue Point in the early-1900s. The inn was later purchased by the Volunteers of America, a faith-based human services organization that converted it to a home for orphaned children. The inn was located on Snow Street, near where the overpass to Pine Point is today. (Courtesy photo)

help she could get.

"One of my jobs growing up was to clean out the cages," Barrett said. "I sold my fair share of snakes as well."

Despite the lucrative profit afforded by the sale of small rodents and reptiles, for Downs and other children in the area, the odor upon entering the White Animal Farm could be a bit overbearing at times.

"You couldn't breathe in that house, there was no air," Downs said. "I never liked to go in because you always knew there was something loose in there. Everything moved."

Even with an extra pair of hands, some animals simply could not be contained.

"I remember going down Pine Point Road one day and looking out seeing my friend poking at something with a stick," Downs said. "When I got closer I saw it was a snake and I knew it wasn't native to the area, so we called the police to come and get it."

As the cruiser pulled up and assessed the situation, the officer didn't quite know what to expect.

"The cop said, 'why did they call me? They know I hate snakes.'" Downs said. "I thought it might be a cobra, it was at least eight feet long. When I said that he almost had, 'the big one,'" Downs said with a laugh.

In an effort to remove the snake as hastily as possible, Downs said he assisted the officer by opening the lid of

the cage for the animal and promptly shutting it after it slithered in. After all was said and done, he knew there was only place the snake could have possibly come from.

"Helen Perley," he said.

Not even a week later, the snake was on the loose again and this time, it wouldn't be so lucky.

"It went to Bruce Turner's house and his wife cut it to pieces," Downs said with a snipping motion.

Perley did more than just provide housing for animals, however, and even trained mice to do tricks at a small circus she built for children to enjoy inside her house. Perley was multi-talented as well. In a book that celebrated the 350th anniversary of the town of Scarborough, Fred Snow, former owner of Snow's Factory, said she was the best clam digger in town.

With their hard earned coins in hand, many children in the area spent their time hanging out at the local variety store, Whitten's.

"That was what the whole town centered around as far as the village," Downs said.

Located across the road from Jasper Street, near the baseball field and church, the store sold a variety of things that included candy and ice cream; a popular

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Blue Point

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favorite for many youth in the area.

"I remember the first time they had ice cream, it was a nickel for a cone and the line of kids went all the way past Harold Snow's. I don't know where they all came from," Downs said with a laugh.

Another local gathering place for residents was a wooded area with a small clearing behind Blue Point Church, known as the Eagles Nest. The area, originally settled by Native Americans, was home to clambake dinners and other informal gatherings for families and children in the area up until the 1960s. Aside from being home to many clamshells, there were a plethora of Native American artifacts and arrowheads to be found.

"I was like Tom Sawyer, down there," Barrett said. "There was always something to discover."

When youth weren't digging for treasure, there was always the local swimming spot at nearby Jasper Street.

"It would actually dam up at the end of Jasper Street and there was a pond that we used to skate at night and behind the church, too," Downs said.

Another distinctive landmark in the area was the Lookaway Inn. Established as a hotel in the early 1900s, the building was later bought by a religious group known as Volunteers of America, which operated the building as a home for orphans.

Like Pine Point, another distinctive feature of Blue Point was the one-room schoolhouse. Located at the corner of Pine Point Road and Jasper Street, the school housed approximately 25 students in the



A crowd gathered at the Eagle's Nest in Blue Point during the early 1900s. The area, which was home to clambake dinners and other informal gatherings, was a popular hangout for residents in the community until the 1960s. (Courtesy photo)

village from the early 1800's until the construction of the new Blue Point School in 1965, and was converted into a house.

Another landmark of the area is Blue Point Church, built in 1878. It served residents until 1951 when the decision was made to build a brick church. The former building was converted into a house.

As an influx of people from out of state moved to Scarborough over the years, and the demand for housing increased, the landscape that surrounded Blue Point

changed dramatically.

"It used to all be pasture. It's interesting to see the metamorphosis that's taken place," Barrett said. "You used to be able to see the ocean."

For Barrett, the development of the area has contributed to the loss of community he and others enjoyed as children.

"There isn't a village anymore. It's all gone away," Barrett said. "You used to be able to walk up and down the road and wave to everybody."

Staff Writer Dan Aceto can be reached at 282-4337, ext. 237.

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Dunstan defined community

Third in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: North Scarborough.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

With three convenient stores, several gas stations, school, fire department, pharmacy, post office, shore dinner houses, barbershop and other businesses, the village of Dunstan had all the amenities of a bustling town in the 1930s.

But for Sarah Matteau and other residents who grew up then, Dunstan, most importantly, was home.

“It was pretty much my world,” Matteau said. “We didn’t have to go anywhere else for anything and hardly ever went to Oak Hill. Going to Portland was like going to Boston today and going to Boston was like going to New York. It’s hard to believe this small area could encompass so many businesses at one time.”

Matteau, along with other residents, shared memories of growing up in the village community for an archival interview that chronicles the development of Scarborough.

The project was spearheaded by Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of the Historical Society so others can look back during the town’s next landmark anniversary celebration.

The foundation of Dunstan village life was a strong sense of community.

“You knew all your neighbors and knew the people that ran the businesses and everyone was friendly. It was a safe place to be,” Matteau said. “We probably knew too much about everybody,” she added with a laugh.

Although Dunstan more than catered to needs of local residents, the area served tourists as well: It was home to a variety of upscale local shore dinner houses such



as the Wayland, Normandy, Moulton House and Marshview. The experience was something to behold, Matteau said.

“You didn’t just go in for a half-hour and eat. It took several hours and several courses,” Matteau said. “And they all seemed to thrive.”

From steamed and fried clams to boiled lobster and everything in between, the shore dinners provided some of the best local seafood in town for residents and visitors. And for \$2 a plate, the price wasn’t too bad either.

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Elm trees line Route 1 in a 1950s-era photograph of Dunstan village. In 1966, a fire burned the local pharmacy, grocery store and post office. The Dairy Corner, a popular hangout today and years ago, was formerly a Texaco gas station. (Courtesy photo/Dan Aceto photo)

Dunstan

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One of the longest lasting shore dinner establishments was not in Dunstan, but just beyond the town line in Saco. Cascades, which opened in 1929, was a popular destination and offered lodging and food for weary travelers who arrived by train.

The restaurant regularly employed residents of Dunstan as waiters, waitresses and kitchen staff until it closed several years ago. Matteau and others remember the establishment not only as a restaurant but a piece of history.

"It was a very sad day for a lot of people when they took that place down," Matteau said.

Thurlow attributed the decline of shore dinner houses and tourism to the popularity of automobiles in the 1950s and less use of the rail system.

"Dunstan had once been a thriving and very populous place," Thurlow said. "Although there is still the route that connects Portland to Boston somewhat, there are no longer any shore dinners and the huge cabin industry has been replaced by motels."

Transportation also enabled residents to have greater freedom. The construction of Pine Point Road across the marsh in the late 1950s would soon bridge villages such as Dunstan, Pine Point and Blue Point to other areas of town.

Loss of shore dinner houses was not

the only dramatic change. In 1966, a fire at Murray's Pharmacy also engulfed the local IGA grocery store and post office. The destruction was an incredible loss for the community, Matteau said.

"It was devastating to the area," Matteau said. "That was the pharmacy, but it was also where many people congregated in the morning for coffee and doughnuts."

The loss of the village center forced residents to buy goods at more distant locations in town, such as the Mammoth Mart – now the location of Maine Medical Center's Orion Center in Scarborough – and bigger grocery stores such as Hannaford Bros. and Shaw's.

The landscape of Dunstan also changed after Dutch elm disease swept through Maine in the late 1960s and 1970s and eradicated nearly all of the elm trees that once lined Route 1.

"It was loaded with elm trees, it was beautiful," Matteau said. "There were a lot of beautiful fields and wooded areas that were turned into housing developments. Today things are constantly changing, it's good, but you long for the old days."

One distinctive landmark of the Dunstan area, the historical society, has a history all its own. Originally used as a generator house for the trolley system in town, the building supplied power until 1932 for one of the more unique forms of transportation in town. The building was



The Marshview, one of many popular shore dinner houses in the Dunstan area, was built in 1940. (Courtesy photo)

later renovated and became a museum in 1961.

Another landmark, Dunstan School Restaurant, was built as a school in 1944 and replaced a smaller wooden school built in 1925.

Among the popular gathering places in town was the grange hall, where local youth put on plays and hosted other activities for residents. For men, different filling stations around the village were a favorite hangout. The Texaco station is still in use today, although for a much different reason: It's now The Dairy Corner.

One of the most popular attractions for tourists and locals was Old Orchard Beach.

"That was the place to go," Matteau

said. "There was nothing like it, and you felt safe down there. You had to go for french fries and soft-serve ice cream."

Dunstan's neighborhoods have changed, but Matteau's memories are always close at hand.

"For me, I can see all the houses and know what they were and who lived in them, so that kind of brings back the changes that have been made," Matteau said. "It makes you realize, 'wow this has happened, they're not there anymore,' but that also happens as you get older and I'm sure my grandparents saw that, too. But what I really miss most is knowing all my neighbors."

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North Scarborough Grange Hall, built in 1909, was a social gathering place for residents of the village. The hall hosted a variety of events, including bean suppers, dances, card games and the annual World's Fair. At left, a sign that reads "Patrons of Husbandry Grange Hall" remains outside the the hall. Although the hall is still used, activity has declined in recent years. (Courtesy photo/Dan Aceto photo.)

Grange hall was the hub of activity in North Scarborough

July 15, 2011

Fourth in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: Oak Hill.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

It's been more than 60 years since Barbara Griffin served her first plate of beans to local residents at North Scarborough Grange Hall, but her memories of the once-thriving village center remain clear as day.

"That was the focal point in town," Griffin said. "It was huge."

This year Griffin retold memories of growing up in North Scarborough for an archival interview that chronicles life from the 1930s. Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of the Scarborough Historical Society spearheaded the project to use during the town's next landmark anniversary.

Life in the early to mid-1900s centered on one establishment in North Scarborough: The grange.

Built in 1909, the Patrons of Husbandry Grange Hall was a social gathering place in town for residents looking to chat, sit down for a warm meal, dance or enjoy the popular card game Whist.

The hall also was host to a slightly larger event: The World's Fair.

Held annually on the first Wednesday of October, the fair was an opportunity for local farmers and craftsmen to peddle their wares and display their finest works



Barbara Griffin heaps a spoonful of beans into a bowl for hungry patrons at North Scarborough Grange Hall. Griffin has worked at the hall since 1943. She continues to help organize bean suppers and other events at the hall. (Courtesy photo)

to residents.

Residents provided entertainment and horse and dog races were held on dirt-covered County Road.

The day held particular significance for Griffin and other children.

"It was a huge event," Griffin said. "I remember as a kid school was closed that day."

The event was catered by grange members who fed up to 500 people who gathered in town for the day.

When the community wasn't gathered at the grange, another local favorite was Sherman's Store, now home to the Painted Turtle Restaurant.

"That was where guys would play

checkers and card games," Griffin said.

For children, activities such as sledding on toboggans, ice skating and board games were all popular community-building experiences.

Some of the activities of yesteryear are frowned upon today, such as lighting bonfires.

"Today they wouldn't let you do that, but that's what we used to do," Griffin said. "Those were the good old days," she said with a laugh.

Although the grange is still used today to host bean suppers and other events, the communal atmosphere is not the same as

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Village

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Griffin remembers.

"A lot of it today is that couples are working and get home at 5:30 at night and they're expected to be involved in children's things at school so there's no time left to go to organizations (such as the grange hall)," Griffin said. "It has changed in that respect. Although today the grange has things young people can do, there hasn't been as strong a draw as there used to be."

Griffin says fewer activities at the grange also led to a decline in a sense of community.

"Things like that kept people together," Griffin said. "Back then there was time to spend with neighbors, but today everybody is on the fast track. Your neighbors were always there for you, whatever emergency it was, they were there."

Thurlow attributes the decline of many village communities to the development of roadways. While they linked once distant

residents, they also allowed further expansion of homes and businesses.

In North Scarborough, once dusty dirt roads are now heavily traveled areas for people outside town during their commute to and from work.

"The traffic is big," Griffin said. "It's bumper to bumper in the morning and evening."

The village, recognized for the fire station at the intersection of County Road and Saco Street, is now home to a busy

intersection that includes Lampron's Little Mart and First Stop Convenience Store.

Although much has changed over time, Griffin remembers the fun she and others had growing up in the northern village.

"For me, growing up there was no other place to go except the grange," Griffin said. "It was a different time, it was simpler then."

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Oak Hill has seen some changes

Fifth in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: Black Point.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

Oak Hill, considered by many to be the town center in Scarborough, has grown steadily over the years to become a burgeoning area for local commerce, education and entertainment.

But Dick Foley and other residents who grew up in the 1930s remember a time when the town was different and life was simpler.

"It was kind of an isolated life really," said Foley, 73. "Back then, Pine Point was its own village, North Scarborough was its own village and Oak Hill was its own village. As a kid I hardly went anywhere else."

This year Foley and fellow Scarborough resident Larry Jensen, 62, shared memories of growing up in Oak Hill for an archival interview that chronicles the development of Scarborough. Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of the Scarborough Historical Society spearheaded the project.

"For many years there was hardly anything off Route 1 once you passed Dunstan," Thurlow said. "There were



Oak Hill Garage as it appeared in the 1920s. The area is now the site of the Scarborough Public Safety Building. (Courtesy photo)

no shopping centers behind where McDonald's is now."

Family-owned businesses helped define the early economic landscape of Oak Hill, Thurlow said.

As a kid growing up in the 1940s, Foley may have held one of the most desirable jobs in town: He worked at his family's ice cream parlor.

Founded in 1948 by his father, Francis,

Foley's was one of the first businesses to define the area of Oak Hill in the mid-1900s. Its nickel ice cream cones in the 1950s quickly earned the business a glowing reputation.

"It was a pretty busy place," Foley said.

Life at the ice cream parlor wasn't all sugarcoated, Foley admits.

See OAK HILL, page 2

Oak Hill

Continued from page 1

"My first jobs included lugging water down to the store, changing the trash barrels and washing the floors. I did about every job in there," Foley said. "I remember I used to work until 9:30 at night on Sunday and then drive back to Boston when I was in college."

In 1963, Foley, his sister and brother took over the ice cream parlor after purchasing the business from their father for a down payment of \$500 each.

The store continued to grow in popularity and served more than 31 popular flavors to people near and far until it closed in 1994.

Although the ice cream parlor was a local favorite, several other landmark buildings also have come and gone over the years, including Jensen's father's auto shop, now the site of Amato's at the Oak Hill intersection.

Across the street at the Bangor Savings Bank site was another famous landmark, Dr. Benjamin Wentworth's house. One of the first physicians in town, Wentworth also owned acres of farmland planted with olive trees where the high school stands today.

One of the most dramatic changes to the area was development of the school district.

Bessey Commons, now converted into apartments for people 55 and older, was the first high school and often the first place children from Scarborough's many villages had a chance to meet.

The former Oak Hill Grammar School also became home to a familiar landmark: The Scarborough Economic Development Corp.

The popularity of athletics in Scarborough made schools a setting for town social events.

"Basketball games were a big thing in town, not only for the kids playing, but the parents," Thurlow said. "If you didn't get there early enough you didn't get a seat."

And after sporting events, there was only one place to go: Mary and Bob's restaurant.

"We used to love going to Mary and Bob's, it was the local high school restaurant and hangout," Foley said. "All the high school kids used to go there after basketball games. It was always fun."

Although the restaurant closed in the 1960s, the land is still used today and is home to St. Nicholas Episcopal Church on Route 1.

When teenagers weren't participating in sports, regular dances known as canteens were held each weekend at town hall.

Other entertainment included the drive-in movie theater, formerly located at the site of Memorial Park

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Oak Hill

Continued from page 2

behind Town Hall, performance plays at the Lions Club, and the local town auction. Jensen recalls attending the unique town event.

"I remember the things that didn't sell went into what was known as the 'glory hole,' and at the end of the auction you could buy the entire glory hole. It would cost about 50 to 75 dollars and take about three trucks to haul it all away," Jensen said with a laugh.

Foley, a member of the planning board in the 1960s, said he remembers the gradual development of Oak Hill as more and more businesses began to express interest in Scarborough.

"It was a big boom time," Foley said. "There was one after another coming in and that's when we first started talking about how to be more efficient with land use."

One of the major factors that led to economic development of Scarborough was construction of Interstate 295, which allowed greater access to the once-remote town from Portland and other larger cities, Jensen said.

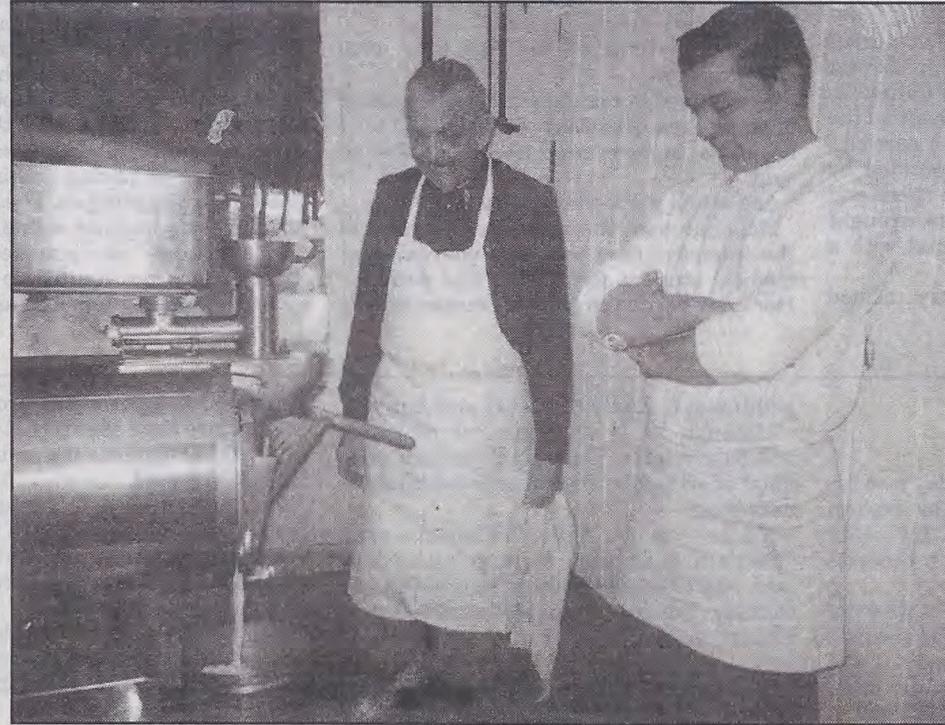
"I-295 opened up Scarborough," Jensen said. "We were like way out in the country for Portland. People in Portland had summer homes in Higgins Beach. That was their idea of getting away from the city."

Another major development came as business expanded: More town residents.

"In my lifetime there has been a tremendous influx of residential population," Jensen said. "It kind of went hand in hand with the decline of the farming and agricultural bent that Scarborough had, and the move toward being a bedroom community for a bigger general business area."

Jensen and Foley remember time with family was a town value as they grew up.

"Back then a big thing for families to do on the weekend was get in the car and drive down to Old Orchard," Foley said. "It seemed like a whole procedure. You would drive down to Ken's Place, place your order, drive around Old Orchard looking at everything, drive back, get your clams and then drive to the ice cream stand."



Francis Foley, left, and his son, Dick Foley, keep a watchful eye on the ice cream machine at Foley's in the 1960s. Dick Foley, who operated the business with his sister and brother from 1963 until 1994, grew up in the village of Oak Hill. (Courtesy photo)

After working at the ice cream stand for a few years, Foley realized his family wasn't the only one with the tradition.

"I remember I used to see so much Ken's stuff in my trash barrels," Foley said with a laugh. "I used to say, 'thank you'."

As time passed, and travel options increased, Foley said more families began to leave town for extended stays farther away from home.

"Now if somebody is going to take a vacation they have to go to Aruba or something. It was very simplistic back then," Foley said.

Although no matter how hectic things got at the ice cream stand, Foley said that there was always time for

family to come together.

"As busy as we were, every Sunday we would have dinner as a family," Foley said. "At the time I remember we'd gripe about it, but when I look back on it now, those were some of the best times I ever had."

Although much has changed since the 1930s, Foley said he still treasures the place he calls home.

"We're very fortunate to have what we have," Foley said. "Scarborough is a nice town, both from an environmental perspective and the type of building diversity we have and I want people to enjoy it and protect it."

Staff Writer Dan Aceto can be reached at 282-4337, ext. 237.

Black Point had 'everything right there'

Sixth in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: Prouts Neck.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

For Mary Lello, life on the Newcomb family farm in the 1930s was quite the contrast from her peers at the other end of Black Point Road.

"We were two miles apart, but it was like two different worlds," Lello said.

Lello, 89, and fellow Scarborough resident Daisy Higgins, 83, shared memories of growing up in the village of Black Point for an archival interview that chronicles life in town. Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of the Scarborough Historical Society led the project for the town's next landmark anniversary celebration.

Life in the 1930s often meant hard labor, and Lello was no exception.

"There was a lot of work to do," Lello said. "We were all farmers down there."

Her brothers helped out in the field and she worked with her sisters in the kitchen.

Growing up on the farm brought responsibilities, even on the daily commute to school.

"Sometimes when we drove to school we would deliver milk along the way. We hoped it was good when we got there," Lello said with a laugh.

Summer brought more business opportunities for Lello and other families.

Prouts Neck, a popular tourist destination, lured travelers from near and far to enjoy local seafood and scenic ocean views. While some travelers stayed in hotels, those without accommodations found lodging in other nearby places, including Black Point.

"People used to stay over like a bed and breakfast," Lello said. "It was amazing the difference in the summer. It was a very busy time."



The inside of Newcomb's store as it appeared in Black Point during the early 1900s. The store was a familiar spot for local youth to find work during summer months and hitch a ride with local farmers to help pick berries and perform odd jobs around the village. (Courtesy photo)

Lello and her brothers and sisters would pitch in however they could, from waiting tables to other chores for as many as 10 guests at a time.

Some guests even became regulars.

"Most people came to the farm year after year and we got to know some nice people," Lello said.

Daisy Higgins, who lived on the opposite end of the village, recalls Black Point as a village bustling with activity.

"We had everything right there in the community," Higgins said.

Higgins, who worked at the post office in Scarborough for more than 37 years, remembers the area just across the marsh from Oak Hill as a thriving community with two general stores, a library, greenhouse, firehouse, state auto garage, church and other amenities.

"It's amazing how different our lives were in that one-mile difference," Higgins said.

Although some children may not have grown up tilling soil and planting vegetables, many youth in Black Point still experienced life on the farm.

At Newcomb's store, local farmers would often park their trucks and enlist help from children and teenagers to pick berries and other fieldwork. The job may not have paid much, but Higgins said it was an experience nonetheless.

"I may have got as much as 5 cents an hour," Higgins said with a laugh.

Higgins said many residents also tended land on the side to grow their own food.

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Black Point

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"It seemed that most everyone had a little farm," Higgins said. "We used to grow green beans, potatoes and other things in our backyard."

By the 1950s, the landscape began to change as farmers started selling land to developers for residential use. Two decades later, the area once known for farming had changed dramatically.

Many farms are gone, but Lello welcomes the renewed interest in farming at Broadturn Farm and Frith Farm.

"It's really wonderful that young people want to do farming," Lello said.

While many Black Point businesses catered to the needs of locals, the village was bolstered by one of the largest train stations in town.

"Many people would take mass transit, the train was a big thing," Higgins said.

Although the train may have brought many tourists to the area, some used the service as a free lift from town to town.

"The hobos would ride the freight trains and get off and come knock on the door," Higgins said. "My mother used to tell us to come in the house, but she would give them a sandwich or some coffee. A lot of people were out of work during that time."

If one thing unified each village in Scarborough, it was the sense of community.

"We were free to do anything and it amazes me to this day," Higgins said. "We used to walk in the middle of Highland Avenue or ride our bikes down to the beach and I wouldn't let my grandchildren do that now. We were pretty free, but everybody knew everybody so that makes a lot of difference."

Among notable people who resided in Black Point was Eldred Harmon, Scarborough's first appointed fire chief, who lived on a farm across from the fire station at the corner of Black Point Road and Spurwink. He lived until he was 99 and was known by many in town as a reputable and hardworking individual, Thurlow said.

Although times were tough, many children found ways

to have fun with a limited budget. From swimming at Foss Farm in the summer, now the site of Camp Ketcha, to skiing down Fogg Road in wintertime and gatherings at the Grange Hall, a little resourcefulness often went a long way in the 1930s and 1940s.

"We were pretty sheltered, but I think it was a wonderful time to grow up," Lello said. "Kids today seem to be so scheduled. When we had playtime, we went out and just played ball and made up amusements, our own recreation. I think we lived in a more relaxed time even though everyone worked very hard."

While the community atmosphere of the village life has changed since the 1930s, Lello looks back on the time she spent growing up with a fondness she always will remember.

"We didn't have any money but we had everything we needed."

Staff Writer Dan Aceto can be reached at 282-4337, ext. 237.



Prouts Neck history features big hotels

Seventh in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: Spurwink.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

Against the backdrop of a picturesque coastline made famous by artist Winslow Homer, the Black Point Inn on Prouts Neck is the last remnant of an era marked by luxurious hotels and summer-long visitors.

"That's the only hotel left now," Elaine Killelea said. "Everything else has changed."

Killelea, 83, and others shared memories of growing up in Prouts Neck for an archival interview that chronicles development of Scarborough since the 1930s. Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of the Scarborough Historical Society spearheaded the project.

Although the hotels may be long gone, Scarborough resident Dorothy Hatch, 98, still remembers waiting tables at the Checkley.

It was a beautiful place to work," Hatch said.

The Checkley was one of seven large hotels that included Atlantic House, Middle House, Jocelyn, Cammock House, West Point House and Willows. They all were known for catering to needs of affluent visitors, but for Hatch, no establishment was finer than the Checkley.

"We thought we were superior to the Black Point Inn because we had an elevator," she said with a laugh.

Unlike today, visitors to Prouts Neck came by train to



A view of Prouts Neck from the early 1900s includes three hotels, from left, Cammock House, Middle House and Willows. The area was once the site of seven large hotels. (Courtesy photo)

Scarborough and often stayed the entire summer, Killelea said.

"People that came to Prouts Neck were very well-to-do and would stay in big hotels for months at a time. They were not your general tourists," Killelea said.

The influx of guests brought employment for many local youths, eager to assist.

"It was a way that some of us picked up extra money for school clothes and things," Killelea said. "I remember the boys would meet people at the trains and help them load their trunks and deliver them to the hotels."

Once vacationers arrived, there was plenty to do, including golf.

"At one time there were about 20 caddies there at the country club," Killelea said.

Although waiting tables at the Checkley may have been considered a summer job, the gig included a temporary change of location and required staff to live all summer in a dormitory attached to the hotel.

While the schedule may have been rigorous, there was

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Prouts Neck

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downtime, Hatch said.

From stealing away to go to the beach, singing in the garden or mischievously sneaking around the hotel at night and causing trouble with the bellhops, there was always fun to be had, Hatch said.

"We all seemed to have a good time. It was like us against the world over there," Hatch said.

Scarborough youth also found work in the area at the general store and grocery, V.T. Shaw's.

"Almost every youngster worked there growing up," Killelea said.

The store even catered to the specific needs of vacationing visitors by taking individual orders for grocery items and other supplies.

"They went to every single house on Prouts Neck and took orders in the morning and came back in the early afternoon from Portland," Killelea said.

After World War II and the advent of the automobile, many people opted to go to larger stores in favor of local markets, Killelea said.

"When supermarkets came in people no longer wanted to shop from local stores and pay local prices," Killelea said. "People began to drive their own cars and that changed many things."

As the years passed, many longtime visitors to the neck settled in the area and eventually bought land and built cottages of their own, Killelea said. Over time, as more and more people sought regular employment in Portland and other bigger cities, work at the hotels became harder to find. A gradual decline began in the 1940

and after World War II, the area changed dramatically, Killelea said.

Despite the influx of summer visitors, there was little that could stop Killelea and others from enjoying themselves in the village. From riding her bike along the boardwalk in the bird sanctuary to ski jumping off the boathouse on Ferry Beach, life couldn't get any better as a youth.

"It was a marvelous place to grow up," Killelea said. "We had beaches, a yacht club, a golf course, a pond for skating in winter, things they (visitors) didn't even see."

And if any child ever acted out, neighbors were more than welcome to tell children how they ought to behave.

"Every adult felt perfectly free to tell you (you were misbehaving)," Killelea said. "Everybody in the neighborhood was a caretaker and caregiver."

That didn't stop Killelea and others from enjoying themselves.

"It was such a safe and wonderful time around here," Killelea said. "It was a time of friendliness, wanton friendliness." Even during Prohibition, the fun never stopped.

"I remember my father and uncles brought liquor into Prouts Neck," Killelea said. "They would come in the winter and wait a little bit until the one police officer went to bed and then in came these people with their liquor. Prouts Neck always had their liquor, even during dry times."

And some of that liquor was quite notorious, including a recipe formulated by Winslow Homer's brother, Arthur, simply known as "Daddy Homer's Punch," a favorite among locals during Fourth of July celebrations.



Dorothy Hatch reminisces about her time as a waitress at the Checkley hotel in Prouts Neck. Hatch, 98, worked at the hotel during the 1930s. (Dan Aceto photo)

"I remember having a glass; boy that punch was strong," longtime Scarborough resident Maude Libby said with a laugh.

No matter where children were, they knew when to come home for supper.

"When you could smell the wood smoke you knew it was time to get going," Killelea said.

Like other villages in Scarborough, Prouts Neck and Black Point were home to a one-room schoolhouse, the Black Point School. Although there may have been only 25 students, the teacher faced staggering responsibilities, Killelea said.

"Sometimes the teacher taught all eight grades, I don't know how they did it," Killelea said.

Killelea said making the transition to Oak Hill Grammar School just a few years later and meeting children from

other villages for the first time was quite a shock.

"It was terrifying, it really was," Killelea said. "It was before we had a school bus, so we had to walk as well."

Though activity in the remote area of Prouts Neck remained fairly calm throughout the years, one event left a lasting impact on Killelea: The wreck of the freighter Sagamore.

The Sagamore, en route from Portland to New York, capsized Jan. 14, 1934, after hitting Corwin Rock off Prouts Neck. The freighter was filled with wool that was quickly saved by local residents, said Killelea. She remembers watching the scene from a bonfire on nearby rocks.

"All the people in town went out and rescued things. Nobody lost their lives and they rescued some very wonderful wool," Killelea said. "Everyone in town was wearing snowsuits from the Sagamore that winter."

Killelea said the memory of her father rowing out to the wreckage frightened her and her mother because he couldn't swim.

"Most men were fishermen, but not many could swim," Killelea said. "It was just one of those things. No fishermen ever learned how to swim."

Although times may have been hard for many in the area, Killelea remembers the beauty of growing up in a time when things were simpler.

"I'm sure none of us had a great deal of money, but we didn't know it," Killelea said. "We had everything we needed and it was a fun and wonderful time to grow up."

Staff Writer Dan Aceto can be reached at 282-4337, ext. 237.

Farms dominated Spurwink landscape

Eighth in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week: Higgins Beach.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

Ralph Lorfano remembers a time when his entire Scarborough neighborhood was devoted to the land.

“Back then it was really all farming,” Lorfano said. “It pretty much took up the entire road.”

Earlier this year, Lorfano, 77, was among residents interviewed for an ongoing series that chronicles the history of Scarborough villages. Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of the Scarborough Historical Society spearheaded the project.

Although Spurwink may not have been a traditional village with a garage and town center like Dunstan and Oak Hill, it still had a strong sense of community.

“All of the farms worked together and knew each other,” Thurlow said. “They weren’t competitors, they were all friends.”

From lettuce to strawberries and every kind of vegetable



The Spurwink Country Kitchen as it appeared in 1960. The restaurant is still a popular spot for local residents.
(Courtesy photo)

in between, Lorfano said demand for produce in the 1930s and 1940s was so great that large trucks stopped by twice a day to collect and ship food to markets.

Work didn’t stop at the end of the day other farmers

picked their crops – it had only just begun.

“There were some farmers who would drive down to

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Spurwink

Continued from page 1

Boston six times a week in the summer," Lorfano said.

Even the experience of going to market in Portland was something to behold, he added.

"The minute you landed there were people right there," Lorfano said. "You'd turn around to weigh something and they'd be piling zucchinis on the scale and putting things in bags. It was absolutely wild for the first hour."

While work was plentiful, wages were modest, Lorfano said.

"In 1938 I remember there was a man who worked for one dollar a day," Lorfano. "It was during the Depression and people were looking for work. I remember the year before he worked for 50 cents."

Although Lorfano admits the hours were long, there was still time to enjoy life.

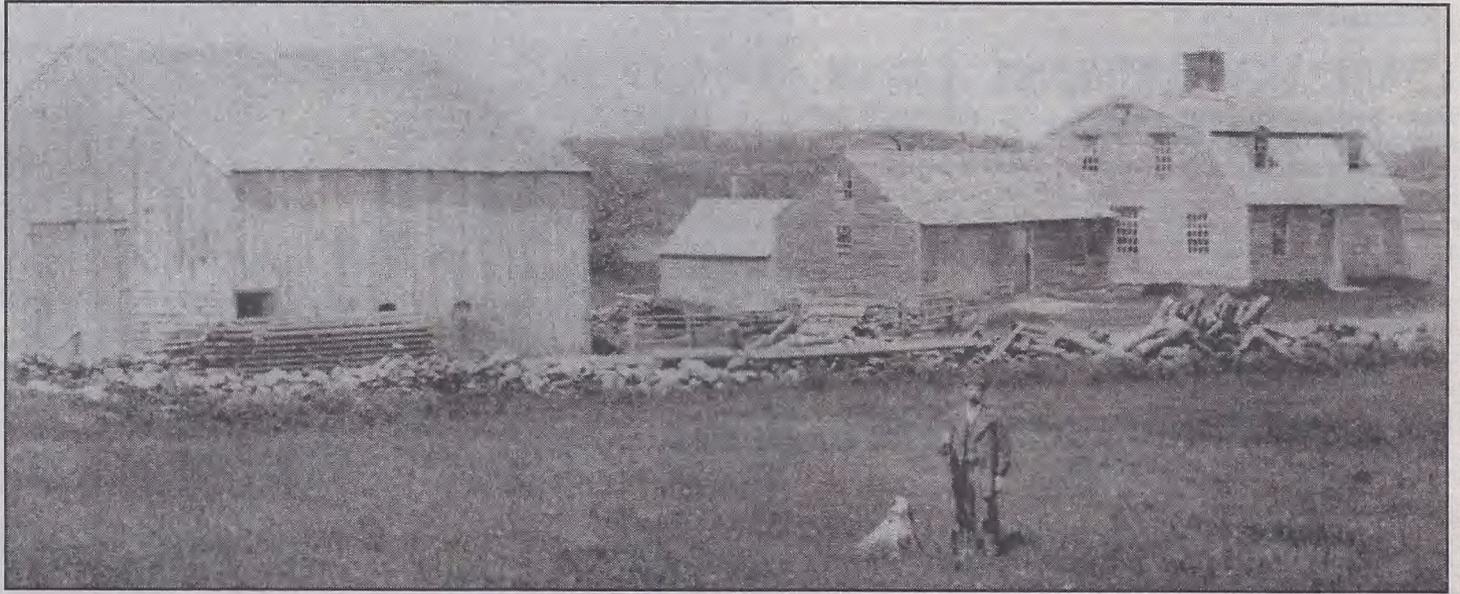
"We used to always say, 'When we're done with this lettuce patch can we go swimming?' And we'd go down to the river for a little while and come back," Lorfano said. "It was hard work, but we still had fun."

From playing in the barn to climbing trees, there was always something to do, including sledding in the middle of the street.

"We used to sled in the middle of the roads, and when they'd come by to sand we would always yell at them," Lorfano said with a laugh. "We didn't really leave Spurwink much."

Going to school in the 1940s, Lorfano remembers the stark difference in transportation.

See SPURWINK, page 6



The Stanford family farm as it appeared in the early 1900s. George Stanford, left, holds a pair of pheasants after a hunting trip in the 1950s. Stanford owned a contracting business and farm on Spurwink Road. He regularly sold produce such as lettuce and strawberries to markets in Boston and Portland. The Stanford farm was one of many that once dominated the Spurwink landscape. During the 1960s and 1970s many farmers sold their land for residential use, which dramatically changed the landscape and occupations for many in the area. (Courtesy photos)

TEPPSICORE

CHECK OUT

Spurwink

Continued from page 5

"They used to pick all the kids in Scarborough up on one bus," Lorfano said. "That's quite the big change. The kids from North Scarborough had a long day; they would be picked up first and dropped off last."

Among notable places in the area was local favorite Spurwink Country Kitchen, a home-style restaurant that still exists today.

Farming wasn't the only occupation for Lorfano's family and others: They also catered to summer residents on Prouts Neck.

Lorfano's uncle, George Stanford, was well known throughout Scarborough. He ran a contracting business in addition to farming and did a variety of work for town residents, including making cabinets. He also held spare keys in case visitors were locked out of their summer cabins.

While farming boomed in the early 1900s, life in Scarborough began to change in the late 1960s and 1970s, Lorfano said. As the value of land increased, younger generations lost interest in farming and many sold property for residential development.

The loss of farms dramatically changed the landscape and culture of Scarborough.

"Now there's none left on Spurwink," Lorfano said. "It's sad to see it disappear."

The sense of community also began to fade as Scarborough's population increased, Lorfano said.

"Back then everybody knew everyone else," Lorfano said. "It's quite a bit different now; sometimes you don't even know your neighbors. Things were much more low key. It's just such a hustle-bustle today with everything computerized. You very rarely get to talk to anybody on the phone anymore."



George Stanford, front center, with a work crew at his farm during the 1950s. Stanford, who owned a farm and contracting business in the area, employed many local youth, including Ralph Lorfano, seated at front right. Lorfano began working at the farm when he was 10. (Courtesy photo)

While much of the landscape of Spurwink may have changed over time, Lorfano plans to continue doing what he loves most: Gardening.

"I don't know what I'd do if I wasn't able to grow a little

food."

Staff Writer Dan Aceto can be reached at 282-4337, ext. 237.

Residents recall bonds of summer

Ninth in a series on the villages of Scarborough. Next week. Pleasant Hill.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

Looking back on his time growing up at Higgins Beach, Andy Putney recalls the joy he felt each summer when his friends from afar came back to town.

“I remember how exciting it was in the spring to come back to Higgins Beach because almost 90 percent of the people coming in were simply summer residents,” Putney said. “They were my summer friends, but we had a bond.”

Putney was among residents interviewed for an archival discussion this year that chronicles the history of the villages of Scarborough. Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of the Scarborough Historical Society spearheaded the project.

See HIGGINS BEACH, page 5



The Breakers Inn as it appears today at Higgins Beach. The inn, built as a private home in 1900, has been owned and operated by the Laughton family since 1956. (Courtesy photo)

Higgins Beach

Continued from page 5

the way across the cliffs and sneak into the pool at the Black Point Inn," Martin said with a laugh.

While the Black Point Inn provided a welcome change from chilly waters of the Atlantic, locals had another favorite swimming hole: The Spurrink River. Even its location next to the town sewer outlet did little to dissuade children from enjoying an afternoon swim.

"We used to like to go to the river because you could run and dive in, but you had to go when it was high tide and only when it was coming in because of what was going out," Martin said with a laugh. "My father used to always say, 'don't open your eyes when you dive in!'"

Questionable soil along the river also provided another form of entertainment, said David Brookes.

"We used to clam in those flats!" Brookes said with a laugh. "But here we are, all alive today."

While the allure of freshly shucked Scarborough clams was tempting, youngsters had other opportunities for nourishment when hunger struck, including the Lunchbox, a local hot dog stand.

"That was a big deal, bringing bottles up to the Lunchbox," Johnson said.

Some children were more honest than others about where they got their secondhand loot.

"I remember there were some who would go around the back of the store and pick up bottles and bring them around to the front," Brookes said.

Although returning bottles was an accepted form of currency at the Lunchbox, area youth also made money doing odd jobs in the neighborhood, including shoveling driveways and other tasks.

For the truly ambitious, there was always the option of being a "pin boy" at the local bowling alley, the Higgins Beach Pavilion.

The job of setting and resetting pins might have sounded innocent enough, but the task was easier said than done.

"You got the feeling they weren't bowling for the pins, they were bowling for you," Brookes said with a laugh.

Johnson and others who took on the job had one simple strategy to make it through a day of work: get out of the way.

"There used to be a bench you could sit on, but once you knew there was someone really chucking 'em down there, you would stand right up," Johnson said.

Dangerous as it may have been, the alley and an adjoining store, Stratford Farms, were local favorites. The store featured an ornate soda fountain made of brass and marble.

"That was the place to go," Johnson said.

The building is long gone, but the soda fountain is still in use today – albeit for a much different purpose.

"My father bought the soda fountain and broke it up for marble," Laughton said. "It's now the pastry counter that I make pies on in the kitchen."

The building also hosted movies and dances on a second floor and was integral to the village for another reason: It was one of the few places that had a phone.

"People with relatives would call the store and someone would run down and find the family that was being called and somehow make contact," Brookes said.

One of the more peculiar services offered to beach residents was Albert Coppola's aerial spraying service in Scarborough called New England Aerial Spray. He would fly over Higgins Beach and spray DDT to ward off mosquitoes in the area.

For those who were traveling to the beach on vacation, the event could be quite startling.

"People from away didn't know what that meant, but they found out soon enough," Johnson said.

"He would take the plane and circle a couple of times

and that was the signal that if you didn't want your car plastered with DDT to move it away," Laughton said. "He'd spray it all over everything and that would knock the mosquitoes down for a couple of days."

The quaintness of the village is what many residents, including Laughton, remember. From local fishermen selling the day's catch or blocks of ice to name signs instead of numbers on cottages, there was always a sense of community in the village.

Laughton, whose family has owned and operated the Breakers Inn at Higgins Beach since 1953, said one of the biggest changes to the area was development of the village away from the familial feel it once held.

"Higgins Beach has become a much more upscale community now," Laughton said. "There are fewer families there with small kids."

Johnson said he has three simple words for future generations of visitors to the beachside community.

"Sustain Higgins Beach."

Staff Writer Dan Aceto can be reached at 282-4337, ext. 237.

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Higgins Beach

Continued from page 1

While Higgins Beach may have traditionally been a summer getaway for families from Canada and other parts of New England in the early 1900s, the area always harbored a close-knit atmosphere.

Changing seasons brought great anticipation of coming guests for those who lived year-round by the beach.

“All my friends were from away,” Brad Johnson said. “People would come in and rent cottages for the summer, then it was a month, then two weeks, which you even rarely see now.”

Putney and his friends always found adventures, even without a car.

“In the old days we never used the streets because there were always unwritten right-of-ways between the properties,” Putney said.

That familiarity lent itself to the rocky shoreline as well.

“It was like a route, you knew where the natural places to climb the rocks were,” Johnson said.

The area further down the beach also provided great opportunities for Rodney Laughton and other Scarborough children to steal away and skip rocks, collect sea glass and enjoy time away from authority figures.

“It was a great place to escape adult supervision and spend a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon,” Laughton said.

Some, like Scarborough resident Connie



A 1910 photo of Higgins Beach shows the Silver Sands Inn, a popular destination for summer visitors, far right. The inn was destroyed in the blizzard of 1978. (Courtesy photo)

Martin, even braved the journey along the shoreline all the way to Prouts Neck.

“Our challenge every year was to get all

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Village view

Plenty of work and play in Pleasant Hill

Last in a 10-part series on the villages of Scarborough.

By Dan Aceto
Staff Writer

Pleasant Hill, located at the four-way intersection where Highland Avenue joins Scarborough from South Portland, has seen many changes from a once rural farming community to flourishing suburb.

Elwood Willey, of Walpole, Mass., says times have changed but he'll never lose memories of growing up and working on the farm to make a living.

"In the 1940s and 1950s it was indeed a pleasant place for a young farm boy to grow up and roam around the neighborhood," Willey said. "Today that more carefree, rural farming environment and culture seems like light years away compared to today's cheek-by-jowl houses built on disappearing farm land, the busy and noisy roads, and the hectic, fast-paced, bedroom community way of living."

Willey, 73, was interviewed this year as part of an ongoing series that chronicles the history of the villages of Scarborough from the 1930s. Bruce Thurlow and Mary Pickard of Scarborough Historical Society spearheaded the project.

While Pleasant Hill's landscape may have changed over the years, one defining landmark has withstood the test of time: Pleasant Hill Hose Company.

Now simply known as Pleasant Hill Fire Station, the PHHC was built in the late 1920s after a fire swept through Black Point along Spurwink and close to Higgins Beach.

The hose company also served a unique role in the community, said previous fire captain Richard Lord, 75.

"We used to say we never put out a lot of fires, but we had a lot of parties," Lord said with a laugh.

From bean suppers to whist parties, and everything in between, the hose company was the center of activity for young and



Elwood Willey, far right, and his father, Jasper, center, were interviewed at the family farm in 1957 by local radio personality George Hunter for his farm and garden show. The Willeys farm was one of many, including Coulthard Farm and Nutter Farm that once defined the landscape of Pleasant Hill. (Courtesy photo)

old alike.

And for local youth, one of the most anticipated events of the year was the annual Halloween party.

With hayrides and hot cider to sip in the crisp autumn air, the event was a special time for many, recalls previous fire

captain Richard Fowler, of Scarborough, 55.

"It was a nice little community really," Fowler said. "It was a very tight-knit neighborhood and you knew pretty much everybody."

Lord has fond memories of the freedom

children had to explore the village's rich landscape.

"Back then it was a whole different world," Lord said. "Kids could go out and we didn't have to worry about where they

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An early Pleasant Hill fire truck at the town dump in the 1950s. The fire station, known as Pleasant Hill Hose Company, hosted many social gatherings for the village in addition to fighting fires. The man standing next to the cab is Seth McDermott, dump caretaker and a special police officer for Scarborough. Behind the engine in overalls is Lou Manter, member of the hose company who lived at the station before World War II and was the first 24-hour man and driver. (Elwood Willey courtesy photo)

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were going. They knew what time to come home for dinner and then they would go back out again. There was no supervision and there were plenty of woods and river and other things for them to do and make their own entertainment.”

Although children enjoyed their time with family and friends, many local youth learned the meaning of a hard day’s work at a very early age.

“I started working on the farm when I was 9 years old for 25 cents an hour. Then I got a raise to 35 cents and when I made 50 cents I thought I was a millionaire,” Fowler said with a laugh.

Some children, like Lord, even made the trip from outside town and traveled from South Portland to Scarborough – a common occurrence when farmers needed

seasonal help in summer.

“Kids today can’t really start working until they’re 15 or 16 years old, but back then plenty of farmers were looking for help and anyone could begin picking strawberries at age 10,” Lord said.

Willey grew up working on the farm of his father, Jasper Willey. He remembers not only the hard labor but community of surrounding families. His father was one of the first in the area to begin the practice of rotating crops.

While Jasper Willey’s corn was known throughout the area, many local farmers also produced great yields, of squash, lettuce and other crops for sale to local markets and even Boston.

Like many other farming villages, Pleasant Hill began to see a dramatic

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change in the 1960s and 1970s as farmers sold land for residential development.

"A lot of the children didn't really want that kind of life," Fowler said. "They knew it was a lot of work and wanted to try different things."

Fowler, who has owned and operated his own farm in the area, said change has been disheartening but indicative of passing time.

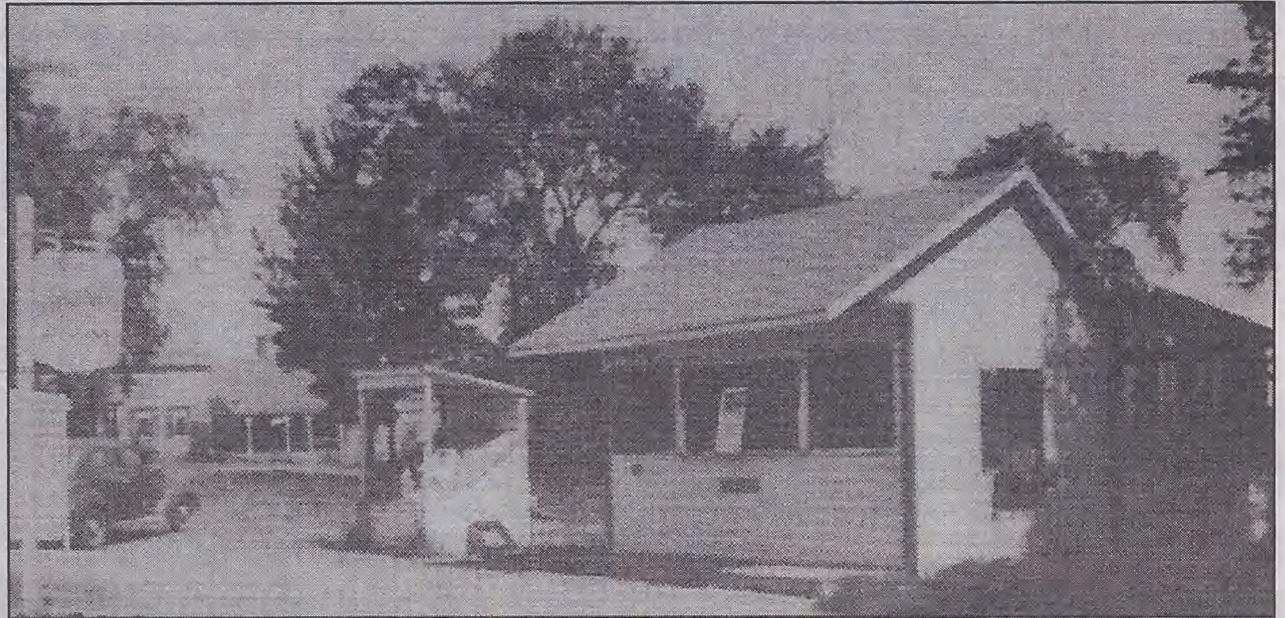
"Over the last 15 years I've never had anyone ask for a job," Fowler said. "When we were younger, we used to get out of school and we couldn't wait to go to work. The \$15 to \$20 dollars we got every two weeks was a lot of money back then."

Youths could always count on farm work, but Pleasant Hill also had other notable businesses: Nut's by Nutter, a nut company owned by Robert Nutter; Cook and Co., a sand and gravel business; Cash's Market, now known as Al's Variety Store in Pleasant Hill; and the local gas station at the Hose Company.

Another quaint seasonal restaurant was the Avalon, a small restaurant, located at the intersection of Pleasant Hill and Highland Avenue.

The Avalon was run by sisters Alice Sawyer and Evelyn Kenney of Scarborough and featured small lunch fare for hungry residents who pulled up in cars along Pleasant Hill and eagerly await a table.

As transportation increased over the years, construction of one of the first airports in southern Maine, the Port-of-



The Avalon, a familiar luncheon spot offering light fare for locals in Pleasant Hill, was a seasonal summer restaurant operated by Scarborough residents Alice Sawyer and Evelyn Kenney. The restaurant was located at the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Highland Avenue. (Courtesy photo)

Maine, was completed in 1928 at Pleasant Hill.

Before it closed in the late 1960s the airport had a number of famous aviators touch down for brief stays, including Amelia Earhart, Charles Lindbergh and Wiley Post.

Lord remembers the experience of watching planes fly close over the Pleasant Hill countryside.

"I'll never forget, you could always see the planes come in over Pleasant Hill and just miss the telephone wires when they landed," Lord said.

Wiley says he remembers seeing Two Lights State Park in Cape Elizabeth from Pleasant Hill when he

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was younger. One of the most noticeable changes in the area has been the increase in traffic and the associated noise, he said.

"There was much less noise pollution due to lighter road traffic," Willey said. "The putt-putt of John Deere tractors among the fields was easier on the ears."

Despite the change, residents still look back with fondness to a time when things

were simpler.

"It isn't what it used to be," Lord said. "But that's just me and the old way of thinking. Scarborough is still a very nice place to be and I think we're very fortunate to live here."

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