

Blue Hill Library Notes

Summer 2017



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

A FUTURE-PROOF LIBRARY

—BY RICH BOULET

It's hard to believe that January was my 15th anniversary as Library Director at the Blue Hill Public Library. The BHPL Board of Directors recognized that milestone by sending me packing...in the best possible way. They encouraged me to take time away from Blue Hill to see what's new and different in other libraries. I took the opportunity to visit a dozen libraries from St. Johnsbury, VT to Darien, CT. It was a fascinating tour, full of inspiration, and one of the best professional development experiences I have had.

Before that trip, I had already given some thought to the notion of "future-proofing" our library, and public libraries in general, partly reflecting on an interesting 2008 Library Journal report about library buildings which contended:

"A future-proof library design strives to create spaces that are *lovable, responsive, energy productive, resource effective, and perpetually significant*. Future-proof libraries thrive on change." (emphasis is mine.)

Those words continue to resonate with me, and they were in the forefront of my mind as I drove around New England.

In 2001, just before I began working here, BHPL made a huge investment in its building and its future relevancy by fully renovating and expanding the library. Since then we have continually invested in better services and facilities. It's been my pleasure and honor to be a part of renovations in the Larchwood (children's) Room, the Young Adult Area (which is now a hive of activity),

and the Elvira Bass Meeting & Archive Room (aka "the Bassment") which helps absorb the huge demand we've seen for meeting spaces. In addition, we have completed numerous "systems" upgrades: lighting, sustainable heating, HVAC efficiency, and a back-up power generator that was installed last year with help from many of you. During that span of time, while *increasing* our operating hours 30%—from 38 weekly in 2003 to 55 weekly in 2017—we *decreased* our overall electricity use by 40%.

On the non-architectural front, we also made investments in library services. Early on, the library established a Youth Services position, initially part-time. To avoid excessive staff turnover, which means better services to you, we also raised wages to parity with comparable libraries. Online services have been considerably enhanced with a better website, improved catalog software, a good events calendar, meeting room scheduling, and lots of down-loadable e-content (books, audiobooks, music). In short, since 2001 BHPL has continuously worked to improve services for you, our patrons.

Looking ahead, we still have a lot of work to do. The library's visitation stats have continued to increase—in 2016 we welcomed about 130,000 people through our doors, an all-time high. This means that the library can sometimes feel crowded and less peaceful than some would like.

To assess whether we are making the best use of our current resources, we are undertaking a space use study that will help set the library's course for the future. On the list of possible improvements are expanded community use space and more quiet areas for patrons who seek them.

Back to those tenets of future-proofing library buildings: *lovable*? I hope BHPL has that in spades. *Responsive*? Some of our space can be easily



Board member Lisa Arbontes-Marshall and her daughter, Annika, at Rich's anniversary party.

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reconfigured, but some fixed walls and shelves limit our ability to truly adapt to all community needs. BHPL is probably about as *resource effective* as it can be under this roof. Though we have significantly reduced our energy footprint, we are not yet *energy productive*.

As for being *perpetually significant*, well, that one is up to you, our patrons, to answer. We certainly hope so; it is the shared goal of the library staff and board. If you have thoughts on how BHPL can be the best library anywhere, send them my way anytime at rboulet@bhpl.net. Thank you!

THANK YOU, ELLIE!



If you have ever browsed the Friends of the Library's famous Book Nook and found a special volume for yourself or a friend, you have Ellie Andy to thank. Under her dedicated guidance (and her many hundreds of volunteer hours), the Friend's book sales have sky-rocketed. Ellie will be retiring from a leadership role this fall, but the library will forever be in her debt for her years of generous service.



Margret Baldwin leads a workshop making terracotta bunnies with clay donated and fired by Rackliffe Pottery.

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PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: RAINBOW WARRIORS



Jon Robbins with Rainbow Warriors' first zine.

— BY SHELLEY LATHAM

When Jon Robbins was invited to attend a Rainbow Warriors meeting last April, he assumed it was an LGBTQ program. It wasn't until he was sitting in the room with over a dozen other teenagers that he realized it was a writing group. Not a problem; Jon likes to write. What he found in the weekly meetings was an immediate and complete acceptance that kept him coming back. Now over a year later, Jon, a junior at GSA, has made the library a second home. "I never came to the library before joining Rainbow

Warriors; now I come 4-5 times a week to see friends and check out books. I take home at least 3 books a week. I love to read."

Max Yntema Rhine is one of the newest members. He is graduating from BHCS and will be attending the Harbor School in the fall. Unlike Jon, Max has been a regular library patron since moving to East Blue Hill from Surry 5 years ago. "After school, the library is like Times Square. Everyone you want to see will be there. It's a wonderful place to hang out and meet friends."

When Libby Edwardson joined BHPL as Youth Services Librarian in November of 2015, she made teen programming a priority. Rainbow

Warriors fills an important community role of creating a safe, creative space for local kids who aren't already overscheduled with sports and other school-run extracurriculars. "The schools already provide a lot of options for teenagers. I think it is important for the library to offer an alternative for students who don't fit comfortably into those traditional activities."

Rainbow Warriors has struck a chord. Attendance averages 16 but as many as 24 kids have shown up to the weekly meetings where they do writing activities, discuss current events, and sometimes bond and relax by playing *Cards Against Humanity*. The group has just published its first "zine"—a small-circulation self-published work of original or appropriated texts and images. "It took us awhile to get this first edition out. I really don't want Rainbow Warriors to feel like school, so we are a little relaxed about deadlines," Libby explains. "We learned a lot in the past year, about the process and each other." Rainbow Warriors will continue to meet over the summer. They are already busy at work on the next project.



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DIGITIZATION BRINGS BLUE HILL TO THE WORLD

—BY HANNAH CYRUS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Not many people get an opportunity to peruse the Blue Hill Library’s archival collection. The hundreds of boxes, housed in the library’s basement, contain thousands of documents, ranging from early town records and Civil War portraits to antique maps and photos from Adelaide Pearson’s travels around the world.

When I came to the library last year, I was so impressed with the extent to which the archives have been preserved and organized, thanks largely to the hard work of my predecessor, Karen Wyatt. But I was determined to help make them more accessible. This collection is incredibly special, and it really belongs to the world. I wanted to make it that way.

Maine State Library Fund (that’s the box you checked on your taxes to support Maine libraries!), BHPL has begun the process of digitizing some of our archives. Money from the grant, as well as from the Friends of the Library, allowed us to purchase a new computer, scanner, and software to get the project underway, and for the past few months our volunteers have been working hard, carefully scanning each page of some of our most precious historical documents and writing descriptions to accompany their digital versions.



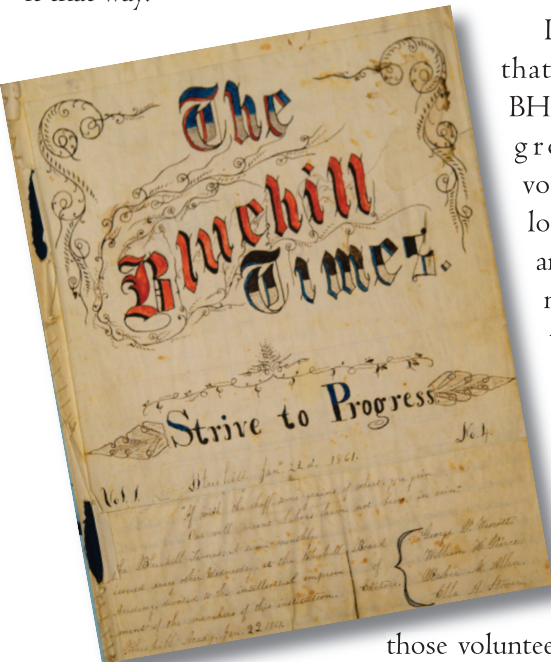
Volunteer Marie Goddard

Luckily, around the time that I started working at BHPL, we had a fantastic group of dedicated volunteers finishing up a long re-barcoding project and looking for something new to do. With such a thorough, patient group, I couldn’t pass up the opportunity to put them to work again helping to make worldwide access to our archives a reality.

Now, thanks to those volunteers and a grant from the

We’re just getting started, but Blue Hill’s archives are already being up-loaded to a page on the Maine State Library’s Digital Commons, which you can check out yourself at www.digitalmaine.com/blue_hill to see what we’ve been working on. In the near future, our content will also be found on the Digital Public Library of America (www.dp.la), a website used by researchers around the world. If this work sounds interesting and you would like to volunteer, just call the library.

Miss Adelaide Pearson, the driving force behind the building of the Blue Hill Public Library, had a stated mission to “bring the world to Blue Hill and Blue Hill to the world.” As stewards of this unique collection, we are honored to open the door to researchers and curious citizens, in all locations, in the present and well into the future.



Blue Hill Academy journal from 1868 (left) and a detail from an academy newspaper. (above)

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VP Sarah Pebworth works the Plant Sale. Rit Dojny (Pres.), Nina Fleming, and Steve Lindsay at the Fall Ball.



The Blue Hill Public Library could not function without an active, passionate, dedicated, and knowledgeable board of directors. It is impossible to overstate the value that these volunteers bring to the community. Besides being hard-working, they are a lot of fun. If you ever find yourself wondering how the library can do so much for so many, you can thank the board. This year the library

welcomes three new members to the Board of Directors: Kathryn Dillon, Glenn Hill, and Jill Knowles.

Edward Dufresne leaves the board after one term during which he chaired the Strategic Plan committee and helped chart BHPL's direction for the near future.



Kathryn Dillon, Edward Dufresne, and Jill Knowles at this year's Board reception.



An annual library tradition: Blue Hill second graders visit BHPL to get their first library cards.

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The library facilitates the sale of art through its Britton Gallery and three art fundraisers: *Paint the Peninsula* (July), the *August Art Show*, and *The Peninsula Painters* (Sept). Artists generously donate a portion of their sales to the library. Thank you!



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FROM VANUATU TO BLUE HILL

BY SHELLEY LATHAM, DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

In addition to books and programming, BHPL is home to an eclectic museum collection. Some of the items have local significance and others were donated to broaden patron's horizons. Adelaide Pearson, whose vision and funds made the Blue Hill Public Library possible, traveled the globe in the 1940s and 50s to bring a bit of the world to the peninsula. She donated many cultural artifacts to share with patrons, especially school children. So, when Richard Penfold offered to donate the hand-carved tam-tam he acquired while doing development work as a young man in Vanuatu, it made perfect sense.

Library donors and patrons were given a rare treat on May 12 & 13 when Josua Tofor traveled from Washington, D.C., donned traditional dress, and played the tam-tam that his father, Chief Tofor, carved over 35 years ago. Josua was the honored guest at the official reception welcoming the tam-tam to Blue Hill. Friday evening featured introductory remarks by Richard about how he came to be in the possession of the slit-gong and how he met Josua (excerpts follow). On the next day, Josua reprised his demonstration for kids and their families.

It is easy to look at the tam-tam and see simply an exotic artifact from a far flung island donated by a kind and generous library patron, but it is so much more than that. After Richard told his tale and before Josua demonstrated some of the rhythms used in his village to sound alarm or begin a ceremony, Josua addressed the assembled guests. "I want to thank you all for welcoming me and my culture into your community." The doors BHPL opens to the world swing both ways. Wherever Adelaide is, she is sure to be smiling.



Richard Penfold

A MAGICAL PLACE

BY RICHARD PENFOLD, MAY 12, 2017

On the 26th of July, 1992 I was at the end of four exciting years spent as a fisheries extension advisor in the South Pacific, living on remote islands with the wonderful people of Vanuatu. I was on my way out, but I had one thing left to do—find an object of custom, a symbol to bring home to England that would always remind me of the magic of this place.

As I traveled up the remote Coast of North West Ambrym, my boat disappeared

into a thick fog, a dense cloud of sulfur smoke from Benbow, the 3000-foot-high active volcano in the center of this island. We anchored in Limbul, and I was quite nervous to soon meet one of the last true kastom Chiefs left in Vanuatu, Chief Tofor, who I had heard stories about—stories whispered in the dark lamp light as we drank kava on Laman Island, stories of power, Nakimas, and custom magic.

When I arrived I sent a couple of large fish to the Chief, with a request to meet him.

After walking half way up the volcano to the jungle village of Fanla, Chief Tofor received me with great warmth, and we drank kava together. It was a beautiful night, and the moon was up shining brightly as we storied on. Then Chief Tofor sang custom songs to me. As he sang he beat the rhythm with the back of his bush knife. It was a wonderful experience.

He led me onto his taboo ground where we stood in front of a line of beautifully carved tam-tams, including this one here. He told me about the tam-tams, and that he had recently carried out two custom ceremonies with this one. As the evening concluded we arranged for the tam tam to be shipped to Espiritu Santo.

In February, 1993, Chief Tofor's tam -tam arrived on a cargo boat to the port of Hull, in England. It was packed in a crate made of tropical hardwood that was later made into two beautiful tables. On arrival it had to be fumigated; the British customs had found a wasp nest inside. The tam-tam lived in my mother's house for over 20 years. In December, 2015, I contacted Rich Boulett to ask if the Blue Hill Library would be interested in adding the tam-tam to its collection of exotic pieces. Bruce Bulger was asked to design and construct a beautiful mahogany base so it could be free standing. Bruce even gave it a slight lean back, just the same as when it had stood, planted in Chief Tofor's taboo ground.

Last year, I was thinking about the tam-tam, and this event, and trying to remember the name of the Village and find out more information about Chief 'Tavor'. While I was doing a Google search, I hit on a picture of three tam-tams from Ambrym Island in the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. The page was part of

a website by a Ni Vanuatu man from Ambrym who had moved to Washington, DC in 2012, and was carving tam-tams. I emailed the man in Pidgin English.

Imagine my surprise when he emailed me back two days later and said in pidgin English: "Daddy blong mi hemi chief Tofor!!" Here was the son of chief Tofor, Josua, down in D.C. making tam-tams!! He told me that the three drums in the Met were made by his Grandfather, Chief Tain-Mal, and that his Father had given one to the Queen when she visited Vanuatu in 1976. So I thought... how nice... the Queen and I, we have such good taste, and we both have tam-tams in our houses!



Josua Tofor