

# Blue Hill Library Notes

Summer 2023

## FROM PLAYGROUP TO PODIUM - Nina Fleming, Friends of the Library and Former BHPL Board Member

Some people measure their kids' growth on the doorframe of the old family farmhouse, watching the lines creep up towards the top of the doorjamb as the years go by. For my family, Millie and Milo's childhood is punctuated by different eras at the library. Can a library be a family member, playing the part of a grandparent for our young children? No, not exactly—and yet in so many ways the library has done just that for my kids over the past 19 years. It has read them countless books, provided unconditional support, elicited lessons in history and civics, taught them the rewards of volunteering and the importance of honest work, offered up celebrations of all kinds, and allowed them to follow their curiosity in directions I didn't think



Millie Fleming reads to one of many Reader Dogs that BHPL has had over the years.

of or know to offer. It welcomed them and their muddy boots with open arms when my parenting skills were wearing thin on any given day, displayed their childhood art, and provided a safe place to be after school when I couldn't make the pick-up time. That first day when I walked through the Parker Point door, little did I know how completely the library would be kneaded into the dough of our lives.

I can't describe the totality of what the library offers to families; the actual list is too long, and every family chooses to engage differently—but for Millie and Milo, it was a formative part of their childhood. I signed up for a library card when my daughter was just three months old, expecting only books out of the exchange. I

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR: A PANDEMIC CODA ~ Rich Boulet

Life at the library is very much on a course to normal, which is a gigantic relief. I am sure you can imagine that working in a public-facing facility these past few years has been a challenge. Many of you are in a similar position.

Looking back, I feel like we are coming out of the pandemic in better shape than when it started and I am really proud of what our team of staff, board, and Friends, has accomplished. I predict that the recent past will have been pivotal to a brighter future at BHPL.

First and foremost, we undertook and finished substantial renovations to the library while leaving its historic features intact. The Main Reading Room (now Adelaide Pearson Room) is convertible into a versatile public gathering space, whether for lectures, movies, receptions...you name it. We also gained a restroom, an improved meeting room and archives space, and a more accessible front entrance.

The property at 13 Parker Point Road that we recently acquired gives us many future options. How we will incorporate that into our program will reveal itself over time and in the meantime the residence is financially self-sustaining as a year-round rental—something that helps in our housing-starved area.

Our Campaign for Endowment was showing positive results before the pandemic, which greatly helped us move forward with confidence. Because of it we bolstered our staff with a new Teen Services and Outreach Librarian, named after a beloved former BHPL librarian, Ruth Slaven. The position has been filled in an inspired way by Kendall Chapman, who, in spite of everything, has been doing wonderful work with teens.

The recent past taught us some new tricks too. Paint the Peninsula has moved—I think permanently—to an online auction combined with an “IRL” exhibit. This approach has doubled revenue for this annual banner fundraiser.



And our wonderful Friends of the Library, who have admirably rolled with the punches these last few years, have a refurbished bookstore with a new business model. Gone are the first-Saturday-of-the-month sales, replaced by an always-open-during-library-hours model. This approach is less work-intensive for our volunteers, and more convenient for our patrons.

The staff has been amazing through this whole thing. Permission to speak frankly? On March 17, 2020, all of their lives were turned upside down and each day at work was a new set of unprecedented challenges. Uncertainty ruled their lives. You all know the steps. We went through this together: Work from home. Come back

to work for curbside services only. Work behind Plexiglas, barely able to hear people. Quarantine returned books and other materials. Disinfect surfaces. Maintain six feet of distance at all times. Limit the number of people who could be indoors or in particular rooms. Whether we were unwittingly putting our patrons in danger was a constant worry.

Our staff, each and every person, rose to those challenges admirably and with creativity. Yet, to add to the challenges, while they dealt with uncertainty, there was also disruption from the construction.

The point of all of this rehashing is that I am grateful to you, our community, for supporting us through it all, to our board and Friends for their undying engagement and support, and above all, to my coworkers for persevering through difficult times. Thank you!

PS How could I (almost) forget—as the pandemic subsided, I was given an amazing opportunity last year, a sabbatical that afforded a 6-week dual-sport motorcycle trip on the TransAmerica Trail, from Blue Hill to Port Orford, Oregon and back. What a way to see the USA. Highly recommended!

## THE FAUSTA AND GORDON EMERSON COLLECTION ~ Karen Wyatt, Archivist

Brad Emerson of Blue Hill has donated to the library a group of documents and ephemera that were collected by his parents, Fausta Torrey Emerson and Gordon Emerson. The Emersons were antique dealers and collectors of items pertinent to Blue Hill history. This donation, known as the Fausta and Gordon Emerson Collection, includes items that will augment the library's archival focus on Blue Hill history. Included are items from George Stevens Academy graduation programs and events from the early 1900's, as well as copies of the newsletter “Mountain Echo” published by GSA students from 1903-1908. There is also information about mines and quarries during their heyday in Blue Hill. There are photographs of Blue Hill houses and structures in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and biographical information about several Blue Hill residents and families. These items can be located through the library's online catalog and are available for viewing and use in the library.



*Women on top of Blue Hill Mountain around 1900.*

# FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY AND PEOPLE LIKE YOU

~ Malcolm Purvis,  
President of the  
Friends of the Library Board

When I hear WERU Community Radio announcing that they are “a 100% volunteer organization funded by people like you” I am reminded that this is also true of the Friends of the Blue Hill Public Library. As a 100% volunteer organization we have once again this year generated a cash income of some \$30,000. These funds are used to support programs and equipment requested by the library staff. Ninety percent of this income comes from the sale of donated books. So, you can see that the Friends depend almost entirely on the donation of quality used books from people like you.

At other times I also think we are a bit like the SPCA—we really want to find a new owner for every single donated book! To this end these books are carefully sorted and cleaned. You would be amazed how much dust and grime a book can collect sitting on a shelf! They are then put on the basement Book Nook shelves for you to browse and buy. The Book Nook is now open to the public during regular library hours. Books are also for sale outside at the Fair Weather Books kiosk, mostly only \$2-\$4 each. Books that are not sold are put out on our monthly “Free Table,” and now also at the Blue Hill YMCA. One way or another, our books do indeed find new owners!

All this takes quite some effort and organization. Moving new donations down to the basement for sorting and cleaning, stocking them in the Book Nook or Kiosk, or filling the Free Tables are no small tasks—and all of this is done by our amazing volunteers.

In addition to raising money for the library, the Friends will once again assist with this year’s Paint the Peninsula fundraiser. And we are looking forward to our Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 29, 2023, when famous cookbook author, Brooke Dojny, will be our featured speaker. And of course, we will once again put on the library’s holiday party in December.

So—please donate your used books, buy books from the Book Nook and Fair Weather Books, and come to our annual meeting and holiday party. And if you have some free time, think about volunteering. You can pick up information on how to join the Friends at the circulation desk or at [www.bhpl.net](http://www.bhpl.net),—and proudly display the Friends’ sticker on your bumper! We really do rely on people like you. 🍀



## FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

~ John Diamond

Spring is a time of transition for the library’s board of directors, as it marks the time when some directors’ terms of service expire and other ones begin.

Three board members concluded their respective terms when the library held its annual meeting of the membership on April 26.

**David McDonald** of Blue Hill finished a three-year term during which he helped transform the nature and management of Paint the Peninsula, the library’s largest annual fundraiser. Time constraints led him to decline nomination to another term on the board. However, we are most fortunate that he remains actively involved with the library in a less demanding volunteer role.

**Macy Lasky** of Little Deer Isle wrapped nine years (three terms) on the board. Macy chaired the board’s personnel committee, participated in the development of the most recent strategic plan, and oversaw revisions to the library’s human resources policies. Like David, Macy has chosen to remain active: She has joined the library’s auxiliary affiliate, Friends of the Blue Hill Public Library.

**Will Taylor** of Blue Hill also concluded his board service following a total of 12 years—nine years as an elected board member followed by three years as a board-appointed “honorary board member.” In that later role he advised the board and Library Director Rich Boulet



as they implemented the board’s ambitious strategic plan, adopted in 2015. A former board treasurer, Will was instrumental in the successful campaign to raise \$1.4 million for the library’s endowment fund.

Although David’s, Macy’s, and Will’s departures represent a considerable loss of board talent, two new board directors with comparable skills were elected on April 26 by library members (defined in the bylaws as card holders and donors 18 years of age and older):

**Barbara Bramble** of Blue Hill served for decades with the National Wildlife Federation, most recently as vice president for international conservation and corporate strategies. She offers the board significant legal, advocacy, and strategic planning expertise.

**Linda Viertel** of Little Deer Isle is a political and environmental activist and community volunteer who splits her time between the Peninsula and suburban New York City. Linda brings to the board substantial advocacy, strategic planning, and fundraising experience, including in service to her local library in New York.

Want to learn more about the current board? Please visit <https://www.bhpl.net/staff/#board>. And thank you for supporting your library! 🍀



Patrons browse at the “Fair Weather Books” kiosk outside.

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...From Playgroup to Podium continued from page 1

was struck by the old-school character, modern attitude, living room style, and the notably steady flow of people coming and going. Clearly a well-loved place. Checking out books morphed into hanging out in the kids' room with the children's librarian, Nancy Guy, who introduced me to the weekly playgroup. I made real friends while our littles shared the pea-pod rocker and snacks, and now, despite our children being grown, I still reach out to this parent group for advice.

Stopping by the library became a weekly—if not daily—habit. Nancy Guy is also responsible for encouraging me to volunteer for the Friends of the Library. While I sorted book donations and attended board meetings, Millie and Milo tagged along and made intergenerational friends, all the while growing, reading, and helping tote books in a red wagon. They saw how a group of willing people can turn old books into significant library funding, and the cooperation and planning it takes to make this happen. I wasn't expecting to discuss *Robert's Rules of Order* with a ten-year-old, but it was a revelation to learn that just as there are rules for driving cars, there are handy guidelines to help a mishmash of adults run meetings and organizations.

There were intangible lessons, as well. The simple physical act of so many different people sharing a giant stockpile of books is an amazing



*Milo Fleming dressed as a bunch of grapes, with his mom, Nina, who is dressed as an octopus for the library's annual Halloween event "Trick or Read."*

thing in and of itself, long before a child can understand the concept of providing free access to information. They learned to respect that not everybody needs or likes the same books; even as toddlers everybody's favorites were different, and the staff modeled being helpful with as little judgment as is humanly possible. It was our public living room, a refuge, a place to see people or to steal a quiet moment alone.

Eventually, the kids each developed their own relationship with the brick building at 5 Parker Point Road. After being a member of the audience at countless events, Milo came full circle and hosted his own this past winter, giving a talk on iceboating in the Howard Room. Unbeknownst to him, he stood in the exact spot where he once pounded on a drum in the toddler playgroup so many years earlier. Millie took her first steps in the Larchwood Room, and fifteen years later she stood in the same room shelving books, her first real job. This summer she will work as an assistant to the Youth Services Librarian. I can't help thinking of this quote from Annie Dillard: "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." We have chosen to spend a significant part of ours frequenting the library. ☺

## EARLY LITERACY AT THE BLUE HILL LIBRARY ~ Claire Malina, Youth Services Librarian

Earlier this year, I received a scholarship from the Sandy River Charitable Foundation to send Library Director Rich Boulet and me to the Family Place Libraries training on Long Island.

Family Place Libraries is a nationwide network of librarians who believe that literacy begins at birth, and it advocates for libraries to be community centers for early literacy, education, and engagement. The training was very informative, and we returned to Maine full of inspiration for ways in which we could improve our services to children and families, from implementing new programming to purchasing books, toys, and other supportive resources.

One core component of being a Family Place Library is the importance of devoting space and developmentally appropriate toys for kids to explore, learn, and play. Play kitchens are one such play space that the Family Place Libraries facilitators encourage libraries to add to their children's spaces. It felt very affirming to have them advocating so strongly for play kitchens since we had just commissioned one to be built in our children's room in 2022 and I had first-hand experience of the kids in our community loving and appreciating this addition.

I had the great honor of working with local builder Howard Chittenden as he created the play kitchen for the children's room last year.

Howard brought such creativity and passion to the project, building an imaginative kitchen that fits the space seamlessly as if it had always been there. He used locally grown and milled wood, some of the

knobs on the stove and a window scene, complete with handmade curtains.

The play kitchen was installed in June 2022 and has been a bustling zone ever since! Kids of all ages have enjoyed it, from babies opening and closing

the cupboards to older children creating elaborate place settings for pretend tea parties. It has been very touching to feel the support of the community throughout the process of its creation—local businesses donating kitchen items; and library staff, community, and family members creating handmade aprons, wash cloths, and napkins that the kids use every day.

Recently, while tidying the play kitchen at the end of another busy day,

I noticed the picture book *Playtime for Restless Rascals* by Nikki Grimes, which was on display. On the back cover, in brightly colored bold font, it said, “Your job is called PLAY! I say.” I think this perfectly describes the role of children and captures the spirit of Family Place Libraries. Kids learn infinite lessons through play, and the children's kitchen, surrounded by books, is proving to be an ideal place for this playful learning to take place. I'm looking forward to implementing additional ideas from the Family Place Libraries training to support the exploration, play, and learning of the children in our community. 🌟



*Young patrons having fun in the Kid Kitchen. Note the window scene and handmade curtains done by Howard's grandkids, Clancy and Celia.*



*Kids playing in the Kid Kitchen*



*Tea party featuring felt vegetables and other play food from the Kid Kitchen.*

last pieces of pottery created by Blue Hill's Rackliffe Pottery before they closed, and enlisted the help of his grandchildren, Clancy and Celia Chittenden, to create further artistic touches of

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