



# Counting House Times

## Fall 2020

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[info@oldberwick.org](mailto:info@oldberwick.org)  
207-384-0000

### Joined Across Centuries

In the 1960s when Allan Breed was a young boy in Reading, Massachusetts, he began hanging around the stalls of dealers in “old stuff” at local antique auctions. Sharp-eyed and quick-witted, he picked up more pointers from dealers than perhaps they anticipated, and in eighth grade he purchased his first piece of furniture, a Chippendale mirror that he still owns as a reminder of where his furniture career began.

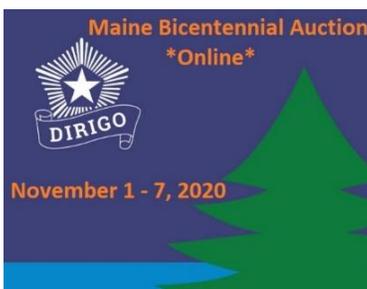
Today, Breed makes high-end reproductions of antique furniture from museums and private collections at his shop in the former Salmon Falls mills in Rollinsford, where he has carried on the cabinetmaker’s trade since 2003. His skill in reproducing antiques reaches back to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century work of joiners, who made chests, chairs and other furniture for early colonial households. Breed has copied a turned chair from Pilgrim Hall Museum, a paneled chest in the collection of Historic New England and a painted press cupboard at Yale University Art Gallery, among many others over his 40-year career. So, when OBHS approached him about reproducing a late 17<sup>th</sup>-century joint stool, the task was not a daunting one.



*Allan Breed working on pegging the joints of a reproduction stool for OBHS.*

For the *Unwilling Immigrants* exhibition, now on view at the Counting House Museum through 2021, OBHS decided to feature the stories of four Scots who came here as prisoners of war in the 1650s. One of those exiles was James Grant, who became a carpenter in the fledgling community of “Barwicke.”. -Cont. on p.3

### Fall Fundraiser – Online Auction



Just as we must adapt OBHS programs and outreach opportunities in 2020, we also must adjust our fundraising event for this fall. Please join us online for a special Maine-themed silent auction in celebration of the State’s bicentennial anniversary. This is a great way to support OBHS while also discovering local businesses.

We will post the link to our website, so please mark your calendar for November 1<sup>st</sup>. This is the perfect chance to do a little holiday shopping, or to treat yourself!

# Old Berwick Historical Society

## Board of Directors

Nicole St. Pierre, President  
Trish Towle, Vice-President  
Sally Hunter, Secretary  
Jane Orr, Treasurer  
Jim Flynn  
Harland Goodwin  
Norma Keim  
Kara Plank

## Committee Chairs

Collections- John Demos  
Education- Nicole St. Pierre  
Finance- Jane Orr  
Fundraising- Jim Flynn  
Programs- Open  
Property Manager- Open

## Staff

Cari Quarter, Executive Director  
director@oldberwick.org

## A Note from the President...

What a year it has been so far! As families, students and businesses continue to adapt to constantly changing circumstances, so does our humble historical society. The spring rush of cancellations pushed people to their computers, and then the summer sun lured people outside. Now that fall and winter are quickly arriving, we have a variety of options: the Counting House Museum is open for scheduled visits, we have planned some fall History Strolls, we are hosting lectures online, and we have moved our fall fundraiser online.

In our personal and work lives, it is a tricky balance between screen time, face-to-face time, and staying healthy and safe. Like most things these days, OBHS programming will probably look a little different in the next few months. OBHS is keenly aware of the screen-time overload that so many people are experiencing. We have chosen and planned our events to accomplish a balance of screen and face-to-face events, while practicing safe social distancing.

We want to assure you that we are here even if things seem quieter. We are still working behind the scenes, answering research requests (which have increased since the pandemic began), doing building maintenance, planning a new exhibit, organizing files, and working through our Strategic Plan.

As our committees cautiously reconvene, we are still on the search for two key volunteers- a property manager and chair of our programs committee. If you have time to give, we would appreciate the opportunity to talk to you about these roles. Please contact our Executive Director to find out more.

We are always grateful for the support of our volunteers and members. We have been especially thankful that so many of you are renewing your memberships during this unpredictable year- thank you!

We wish you all good health,

Sincerely,

Nicole St. Pierre, OBHS President



*Counting House Museum volunteers participating in the annual "Volunteer Appreciation Day" field trip. (2019)*

## Annual Meeting Vote for Board Directors

Each May at our annual meeting, members of Old Berwick Historical Society vote on the slate of Board Directors proposed for the upcoming year. Since we were not able to meet in May, the Board has chosen to move that voting to an online format. Please go to our website, and on the home page you will find a link to a form asking for your vote. Please complete the form by October 23rd. Thank you!

## *Unwilling Immigrants* is Open for Visitors

OBHS is pleased to open the *Unwilling Immigrants: From the Scottish Battlefield to the New World, 1650*, an investigation of the Scots prisoners from the Battle of Dunbar. Due to pandemic delays, we were able to secure an extended loan, and the exhibit will now be on display through the end of 2021 season.

The panel and touchscreen exhibit, produced at Durham University in England, is expanded at the Counting House Museum with a display of artifacts and images that recount the experience of the Dunbar prisoners who arrived in southern New Hampshire and Maine as indentured servants and settled in the Berwicks, leaving a long and proud Scottish legacy in our town.

The companion exhibit focuses on four soldiers from Scotland, who survived starvation, imprisonment and travails at sea to become sawyers, farmers and carpenters in New England. It features items from our collection, including materials from the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Chadbourne house and sawmill site, as well as objects loaned from local collectors.



*The Counting House Museum is open to Members by appointment only on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Limit of 5 guests per appointment, and facemasks are required. Call 207-384-0000 or email us at [info@oldberwick.org](mailto:info@oldberwick.org). Free admission, donations gratefully accepted.*

## Joined Across Centuries (*cont. from page 1*)

Evidently Grant made furniture as well as timber-frame buildings, since his 1684 household inventory includes a cupboard, chests, chairs, a round table and “three Joynt stooles”—far more furniture than his compatriots—in addition to carpenter’s tools and lumber.



*The finished stool stained with its bright red ocher.*

To breathe life into that faded inventory, OBHS asked Breed to reproduce an original oak stool, dated about 1670 to 1690, that was kindly shared from a private collection. The new stool is made of red oak and pine rubbed with linseed oil and red ochre, a finish commonly found on 17<sup>th</sup>-century stools. Breed used a kit of about 16 traditional tools, including tools used by carpenters like Grant, such as a froe for splitting oak stock, a drawknife for shaping parts and a smoothing plane for the pine seat.

Seeing furniture craftsmanship at close range over decades has given Breed an appreciation for the work of his predecessors. “Their joinery was sophisticated,” he notes, “and the pegged joints remain tight after almost four centuries.” Breed is also impressed by the efficiency of 17<sup>th</sup>-century craftsmen, who concentrated effort on visible parts of the furniture only. Another outstanding feature of their painted work is the vibrant color that he finds hidden in joints and carved surfaces, which animated dark interiors of 17<sup>th</sup>-century homes.

In a humble stool there are lessons learned across 15 generations and nearly four centuries of craftsmanship in New England. OBHS is grateful to Al Breed for his joinery and for his enthusiasm in bringing the story of a fellow craftsman to life.



**Old Berwick Historical Society**  
**P. O. Box 296**  
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***RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED***

**BULK RATE**  
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**Permit No. 33**  
**S. Berwick, ME 03908**

## **Upcoming Programs: Please Check our Website for Updates**

**History Stroll: The Fire of 1870- October 17 & 24, 10am** OBHS archivist John Demos will twice present a tour of downtown South Berwick, focusing on the destructive fire of 1870. Limited to 8 people per tour, masks & reservations required. Please go to our website for the sign-up link, or call 207-384-0000.

**History Stroll: Old Fields Burying Ground- October 25 & November 1, Noon** OBHS archivist Kaja Roan will twice present our annual tour of Old Fields Burying Ground, one of the oldest cemeteries in Maine. Limited to 10 people per tour, masks & reservations required. Please go to our website for the sign-up link, or call 207-384-0000.

**Lecture: Destroyed and Reborn: South Berwick Fire and Brick Business Block, 1870-2020- Oct. 22, 7:30pm online**  
One hundred fifty years ago, South Berwick's town center lay in ruins following a cataclysmic fire on the night of July 25-26, 1870. Citizens then pulled together and raised the iconic brick business block that defines the village today. Local historian Wendy Pirsig presents this dramatic community story in treasured photos, maps and eyewitness accounts from the Old Berwick Historical Society archives. Register using the link on the home page of our website.

**Week of Nov. 1-7 – Fall Fundraiser-** Online “Maine Bicentennial” Auction

***The Lecture Series is Sponsored by Kennebunk Savings***  
**The Counting House Museum is open Wednesdays and Saturdays by Appointment.**  
**Email [info@oldberwick.org](mailto:info@oldberwick.org) or call 207-384-0000**