TOWN CRIER

The Annual Budget Town Meeting was held Tuesday, May 17. For results visit **www.westbath.org** Primary Elections will be held Tuesday, June 14, from 8am to 8pm at the West Bath Fire Hall. Absentee ballots can be requested online, by phone (207-443-4342), or in person at Town Hall.

A few friendly reminders:

- ATV registrations expire May 30. 2022 registration stickers are now available online or at Town Hall.
- Moorings must be registered annually for $10. You can register by mail with check payable to "Town of West Bath" with "mooring" in the memo line.
- The West Bath Transfer Station now asks that residents identify with stickers, which are available at no charge at Town Hall.

If you would like to receive weekly email updates on meetings and events, contact Karly Perry at **townclerk@westbathmaine.gov** or visit the Town of West Bath page on Facebook.

-Karly Perry, Town Clerk

THE MIDDLE GROUND
Daily Life & History of West Bath, Maine

Volume 24, Number 2 *** Spring/Summer 2022
Published by the
West Bath Historical Society
PO Box 394, Bath, Maine 04530

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Annie Walker Merry, Elizabeth Nelson,
Kerry Nelson, Karly Perry, Leah Zartarian

Designer: Ash Kahrl, Bath Printing
Distribution: The WBHS Board

We publish researched historical materials, local news and events that may be of later historical interest. We don't print advertising, gossip or political opinion. To offer news items, historical photos or documents, or for more information, contact Kerry (443.5118).

THE MIDDLE GROUND
West Bath Historical Society
PO Box 394
Bath, Maine 04530

A unique photo of the original **New Meadows Lobster Pound** with an outdoor dining area, with wooden picnic tables and and a colorful striped awning. This was a precursor to the actual New Meadows Inn. This image was donated to WBHS from the Armstrong sisters who are granddaughters of **Samuel Armstrong, Sr.,** the original owner. [See page 3 for the full story]

THE MIDDLE GROUND
Daily Life & History of West Bath, Maine
SPRING/SUMMER 2022 • PUBLISHED BY THE WEST BATH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

THE STORY OF WITCH SPRING

By the late 1800's, Witch Spring was still considered an idyllic and peaceful spot, cooled in summer by the enormous pines, and was visited frequently, often with long lines at the well. People would come to picnic there as well as enjoying the well water. There was an old wooden trough carved from a large log into which the water ran, though a pipe, a few feet down from the actual spring source. Here was where the horses would drink. It is said that this trough was covered with a shiny array of tin signs advertising various patent medicines, washing powders, and local businesses. We know that's true because we have a photo to prove it! *- con't page 2*

How Witch Spring got its name.

An old tale claims that in about 1780 a man was riding from Bath to his home on Berry's Mill, late on a moonlit night. As he passed by the spring, he spotted a white apparition, which spooked him and his horse mightily. He thought it was a ghost or a witch. The next day, an armed group of his friends came to check. and found that the "witch" was a white horse pastured nearby. No matter: the name stuck

On the hill across from the end Berry's Mill Road where today it meets State Road (a spot known to old-timers as "Witch Spring Hill") is the site of an ancient watering hole, long called "Witch Spring". It is an artesian well that erupts from a fissure in the solid granite formation that lies just below the surface of the hill.

The water is cold and clear. While there are no written records of its use by Native Americans or early settlers in the area, no doubt it was known far and wide as an excellent water source. By late colonial times, it was definitely well known and utilized by many.

A pleasant place to visit

By 1881, many visitors flocked to the spring. Though a pleasant place, it was getting a bit worn from overuse. Here's a first-person account by one writer: "The other day we drove out to Witch Spring to enjoy a drink. The forest trees still remain to shade the clear waters of the spring, and may they always stand as pleasant reminders of the past and shady sentinels for the future. The spring needs looking after. The old wooden box which formerly enclosed the spring proper, like a pair of very small breeches on a very big boy, has outgrown its use. There is really need for this charming little spot be paid attention, if not by the city [Bath] then by private individuals."

WBHS ANNUAL MEETING & POTLUCK SUPPA' SOCIAL JUNE 22

Hold the date! Everyone in the community is welcome to attend this event, at the Old West Bath Meeting House on Berry's Mill Road at 6:00pm. Please contribute a savory or dessert dish to share and tote your own plates & silverware. Cups and napkins and drinks will be provided. Jim Atherton and his band of merry band brothers, the "Front Porch String Band" will be our evening's entertainment. A jolly event indeed. For more info, call Leah at 443-5907.

THE STORY OF WITCH SPRING Con't

The gypsies are coming!
In a summer Saturday in 1883, a roving band of gypsies arrived and made camp around the spring. Gypsies had traditionally made this summer stop every year, so it was no surprise, but their arrival still caused a stir. There were four families, with their colorful carts, horses, and half-dozen children among them. By Sunday, a goodly number of townsfolk swarmed to the campsite and swapped horses and bought jackknives. The band broke camp after four days and reportedly headed for Gardner.

Not everyone was happy with their experience. One Bath man was reportedly smitten by an unusually large Gypsy horse and traded his colt for it on the spot. However, when he got his "prize" home, he discovered that the animal balked and kicked. He summoned one Marshall Kittredge, and the two went to the camp to see about restitution, but Kittredge determined that it had been a square and fair trade. The gypsies soon moved on, with the colt in tow!

Beauty despoiled
Witch Spring continued to thrive, but in 1899, things changed considerably. The fellow who owned the land chose to chop down all the trees sheltering the spring, for a puny profit. Locals were outraged and sent letters to the *Bath Independent.* There were pleas from the public to leave at least a few of the grand old pines. But alas, no tree around the spring was spared.

"What was once one of the most beautiful and romantic spots in Bath's suburbs, with its great trees covering the steep hill, is now one of the most barren and forlorn. The tall pines have all been cut down. Not a tree has the woodman left to shade the wayfarer as he stops to drink from the now sun-warmed spring," lamented one sad citizen.

Another wrote that "…two thirds of the beauty of that pleasant and romantic locality has been forever destroyed" and goes on to plead that if there is such future devastation in the region "… at least a few of the grand old pines be allowed to remain to suggest to future generations what this one has lost."

Another wrote that "…two thirds of the beauty of that pleasant and romantic locality has been forever destroyed" and goes on to plead that if there is such future devastation in the region "… at least a few of the grand old pines be allowed to remain to suggest to future generations what this one has lost."

Old Spring; New Spring
Construction of the Bath/Brunswick (State) Road in 1938 caused a radical change in Witch Spring: the original source of the spring was paved over, to the outcry of many. A new source of the artesian water was promised, but that took a while. Eventually a new spring – from the same original artesian source - was relocated to the north side of State Road, from a vein slightly higher than the old. There, it continued to be used to collect household drinking water for many years.

By 1942, the spring water was running well, though sometimes at a slower rate, depending upon demand and weather. At one point some good Samaritan put a valve on the Witch Spring pipe, to control the flow so it wouldn't be running all the time. Of course, in winter, it would have to be removed so the water in the short stretch of pipe leading from the opening to the outlet would freeze. In winter, there was limited demand, but in warmer weather, folks flocked to the spring, Witch Spring had to provide water not only to the hundreds of regular "customers" (the water was always free!), but for many of the summer people with homes between the New Meadows and the Kennebec. Either they were not connected to city water, or they preferred their drinking water without such liberal doses of chlorine! As one news item reported, "Once a person gets a taste of this spring water, all other seems adulterated and not real satisfying."

Farewell Witch Spring
In the 1980's, Witch Spring was permanently shut down due to contamination, probably due to construction and development of the surrounding area. But the original spring still bubbles up, possibly from the very spot where it was "permanently" paved over in 1938, often creating hazardous ice conditions at the junction of Berry's Mill and "Witch Spring Hill" in winter. Does Mother Nature prevail??? ■

CROSSING THE BAR

Betty Fitzjarrald, *con't...*
She was a 50-year member of the American Association of University Women, and chaired a volunteer effort to restore the 1849 Growstown School in Brunswick. Since 1983, local 5th-graders have visited to re-enact a Victorian-era school day, complete with costumes, antique desks, chalkboards and wood-stove heat.

Betty also volunteered at the Mid-Coast Hospital Auxiliary where she helped created a fund-raising cookbook, and to her family's delight, conscripted them to "test" dessert recipes for the project. "Merrymeeting Merry Eating" (1988) is still cherished by family. She loved taking her children to Popham Beach, sailing, skiing, skating, camping, and summer road trips to the Rockies.

Betty and Launy built their dream home in West Bath, where she became active with the West Bath Historical Society. [Her snickerdoodles were always in demand at WBHS events!] When not traveling she enjoyed shows at the Maine Music Theater, and local bridge, book, knitting, and dining groups.

Betty was predeceased by her husband. Survivors include her two children, Andrea (Jim) Klaas, Lance (Kimberly) Fitzjarrald, and four grandsons. Her goddaughter, Linda Campanella was always in her thoughts. she shared many laughs with her sister, Janet (Allan) Virr, her niece and nephew, and relished being Great Aunty Betty to their children. She is also survived by her beautiful trees and ravenous deer, fox, raccoon, squirrel, and feathered friends.

Always young at heart, Betty's parting wish was to be able go outside and roll in the snow. It snowed the next day. ■

TO ZOOM OR NOT TO ZOOM!

Earlier this year Jim Brophy represented West Bath for the Patten Free Library's Town History Series. His topic was the geology of West Bath and its effects on our history. Here are his thoughts on the experience.

"We were still in the midst of the COVID pandemic, so the presentation was conducted remotely via Zoom. Having been a university professor for 35 years, I was asked to give my thoughts on the use of Zoom for such lectures. Let me say, flat out, that there is no alternative to a live, in-person, face-to-face talk. It's very important for the lecturer to see his or her audience and vice-versa. Body movements, facial expressions and delivery are as much a part of good lecturing as are the spoken word and the visuals (I still call them slides!). With Zoom, you have exactly zero audience reaction and, sadly, no room for follow up questions.

"On the other hand, a Zoom lecture has virtually unlimited audience capacity. When we get out from under the yoke of COVID, I would recommend a possible multi-media approach in the future: a live, in-person lecture at the library and a concurrent Zoom session, as well as broadcasting on local community access TV.

"But if we are still going to be presenting via Zoom, I would recommend that all speakers should make themselves visible in the upper corner of the Zoom screen along with whatever graphics are being shown. That way the audience can see the speaker's facial expressions and hand gestures to enhance the presentation's overall quality." - Jim Brophy ■

WEST BATH STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Named to the Fall 2021 Deans List:
UMaine – **Tyler Andresen, Connor Bennoch, Caiden Fraser & Sarah Meyer-Waldo.**
University of Utah - **Annie Clifford.**
Husson University - **Mark Robert Werner.**

COOK'S KORNER

Strawberry season will be upon us before we know it. And Maine strawberries have a sweet but short life. Just serve with a little brown sugar and maybe some vanilla ice cream. Or drizzle with a little balsamic vinegar or Grand Marnier. Here's another festive way to enjoy them.

Joan Drake's Frozen Strawberry Margarita Pie

Directions

Crust: Make Graham cracker crust: 1-1/4 cups Graham cracker crumbs,
2 tbsp. sugar, 5 tbsp. melted butter. Add a bit of lime zest if you like.
Press into buttered 9" pie plate. Bake at 350 degrees for 12 minutes. Let cool.
Filling: 1 quart strawberries, hulled and cut in half. (Set aside a few for garnish.)
Process strawberries, zest of lime; juice of two fat limes,
1 14-oz can sweetened condensed milk; 2 tbsp. tequila and Grand Marnier (or any orange-flavored liqueur).
Spoon into a large bowl.
In separate clean bowl, whip 1-1/2 cups heavy cream to stiff peaks. Fold 1/3 of cream into strawberry mixture to lighten; then fold in rest of cream in two batches. Pour filling into prepared crust, mounding is slightly. Freeze (uncovered) until firm – about 4 hours. Place in fridge for about 30 minutes to soften slightly for cutting. (Note: pie can be frozen, wrapped tightly, for a week or two). ■

CROSSING THE BAR

Roger E. Reid, 86, of Great Island, died Jan 22 at home surrounding by his loving family. Among his survivors is a son, **Michael Reid** & his wife **Marie** of West Bath.

Carolyn Elaine Snow, 82, of Hill Road, passed peacefully after a long illness on Jan 23. She was born in 1939 in Danforth to Omar & Hilda Fitzpatrick and attended schools in East Grand Lake, graduating as vice president of her class and captain of the girls' basketball team. In 1958, she moved south to work at the telephone company in Bath, where she met the love of her life, **Richard "Dicky" Snow** and they wed in 1960. In 1995, they purchased her beloved camp in Bancroft, and from that day, they spent most of the spring, summer and fall months enjoying the outdoors, fishing, making maple syrup, and bird hunting (she was a great shot). She was an incredible cook, known for her jams and dilly beans. She loved cleaning a mess of trout, or just sitting around a campfire. She also loved coming back to spend winters at their West Bath home.

Carolyn is survived by her husband of 62 years; her younger brother; two daughters, Carrie Hayes & her husband Sam and Lori Snow Molt; son **Randy Snow** & his wife **Jennifer** of West Bath; four grandsons, including **Mike Bennett** & his girlfriend **Kristin,** of West Bath; a granddaughter, two great-grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

Margaret J. Sylvester, 99, of Freeport, Hawthorne House, passed away Feb 14. She is survived by her daughter-in-law, **Victoria Sylvester** of West Bath, a grandson and two great-grandchildren.

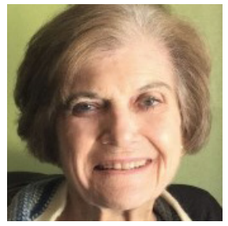
Kerry D. Billings, 61, passed away March 6 after a courageous battle with cancer. He was born in 1961 to Neil & Valerie Billings, and he served his country proudly in the Army. Among his survivors is his son Ian Halsey; four brothers, including his twin brother Kevin. His mother Valerie predeceased him by just a month, passing away on Feb 15.

Kourtney Mae Sherwood, 37, of Brunswick, lost her long battle with mental illness and addiction in early March. Born in New Hampshire in 1985, she was the youngest of a large family. Kourtney leaves behind her spouse, Stacy Beverage; her mother and stepdad; four siblings, and her three children, born of her previous marriage to **Dan Sherwood** of West Bath.

Harry R. Lewis Sr., 76, of West Bath, passed away suddenly at home on March 29. Among his survivors is his fiancé, **Adele Madore** and a son, **Timothy E. Lewis** of West Bath.

Ann Louise (Donnell) Schroeder, 77, of Brunswick, died Nov 22, 2021, at home. The daughter of the Louise & Henry Donnell, she graduated from Morse High School, class of '63, and received her BSN from University of West Florida in 1979.

She was married to Michael Schroeder of Berwick; they divorced in 2011. She served in the U.S. Navy for over 7 years, then worked for Goodall Hospital in Sanford for over 20 years. For many years, Ann was a member of the Phippsburg Congregational Church. In 2021, shortly before her death, she donated a painting to the WBHS, which is a rendering of the New Meadows Spillway. ■



Betty Fitzjarrald, 87, of Houghton Pond, died at home January 6. She was born in Medford, MA in 1934 to Walter Duncan & Lydia Hutchinson. Graduating from high school with honors, she studied biology and chemistry at Simmons College while working with Boston and Harvard Medical School bacteriology labs. After graduation in 1957, Betty joined a Harvard-British team researching infectious diseases.

According to family lore, she met her husband, **Launy Fitzjarrald**, through a ski accident in New Hampshire, when she "rescued" a stranger -- an Idaho "hotdog" who crashed on the slopes and hooked the tip of his ski in his ear. Betty promptly packed snow in his bloody ear and saved him. That fateful meeting evolved into a nearly 60-year loving marriage.

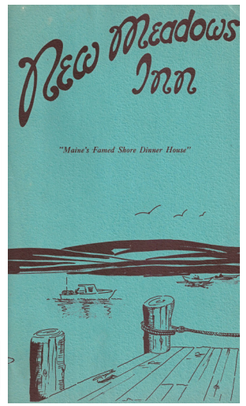
Betty and Launy moved coast-to-coast as he tested Cold-war radar sites in isolated areas, often living in rustic conditions. They enjoyed their child-free years camping, kayaking, skiing, and exploring the US and Canada.

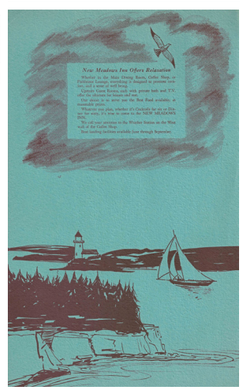
While living in Freeport, ME, their daughter, Andrea, was born. Always on the move, the young family left for Seattle before returning to Maine and putting down roots in Brunswick in 1969. Her son, Lance, was born soon after.

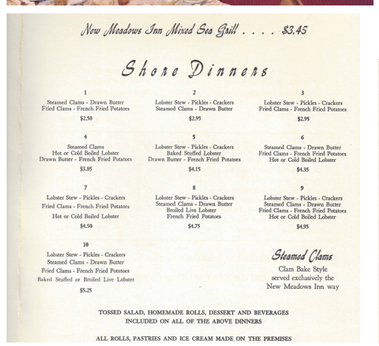
Betty was an ardent advocate of women's reproductive rights, vigorous promoter of the Equal Rights Amendment, and enthusiastic supporter of higher education. (*Con't page 7.*)

WBHS ACQUIRES GIFT OF NEW MEADOWS INN MEMORABILIA

The granddaughters of Samuel Lewis Armstrong, Sr., who was the original owner of the New Meadows Inn, have donated a treasure trove of memorabilia for our archives. The materials include a full set of framed photographs documenting the changes to the Inn over each decade from 1930-1970; various menus over time, illustrated with original ship-rigging drawings done by Richard Armstrong himself. There are also brochures from the Inn, a laminated newspaper article from the *Brunswick Record* announcing the May 1951 opening of the "new" New Meadows Inn, and business cards for both Samuel and Robert. Also, included in an envelope of photographs is the only extant photo of S.L. Armstrong's lobster pound and picnic tables located on the site of what became the "new" New Meadow Inn, which he built in the 1940's.







While ***Middle Ground*** has published several "remember when" articles on the Inn, Liz Armstrong and her sister Rosemary felt that their discovery of new archival material would be of historical value. Liz also shared some more detailed history of its origins.

"My grandfather, whose parents were originally from Machias, returned to Maine in the 1930s and started a lobster brokerage (based in New Harbor) which turned into a food concession in Bath to support shipyard workers during WWII. He bought property in West Bath to create a lobster pound on the New Meadows River and ended up developing the property into a restaurant with 10 hotel rooms. He then built a house for himself and my grandmother across the street, with cabins for nightly rental during the tourist season, and named his business "the New Meadows Inn and Cabins."

"Samuel died suddenly in 1955 and my father, Richard J. Armstrong, Sr., ran the business for 39 years until his death in 1994. My mother, Doris Armstrong, took ownership of the Inn and ran it with my brother's help, for 10 years before selling the property in 2004. My mother passed away this past October of 2021. It was while cleaning out her home for sale, that my sister and I found so much material we thought would be worthy of preservation.

"Some are about the history of the original New Meadows Inn that burned down in the early 1930s and was located up river of the "modern-day" New Meadows Inn [now a day-care center and church.] My father also had a lot of framed photos and other information that showcased the history of the area including steamboat operation on the New Meadows, other historic hospitality businesses in the area (such as the Aliquippa House) and the trolley system that ran from Portland to Lewiston to Brunswick, West Bath and Bath." ■

WBHS SPONSORS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP FOR WEST BATH

Last year, the West Bath Historical Society created a new scholarship for a graduating senior from Morse High School. We are continuing to sponsor this program, and currently, 9 Morse seniors have applied for our $1000 award. The candidate must be a West Bath resident, graduating in good standing, and planning to continue his or her education for the fall 2022 semester at an accredited post-secondary institution.

The winner will be announced at Awards Night on June 9th in the Morse High Auditorium. This year's scholarship is being given in memory of Betty Fitzjarrald, who was active member WBHS, as our Littlefield School advisor. Betty sadly passed away in January. [See page 6 & 7 for her obituary.] ■

MEET THE WEST BATH HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD

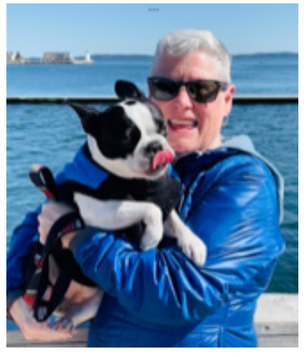
Leah Zartarian, President, who grew up mostly in Alexandria, VA and San Antonio, TX as an Army "brat", attended Wellesley College and McGill University Faculty of Medicine. She moved to Birch Point with her husband, Gary, in 2010. Previously, the couple lived in Falmouth, MA, where she worked as a primary care family practice physician for 20 years, while Gary was a gastroenterologist. Now retired, Leah continues her interest in health care advocacy, and is actively involved in community organizations, including the West Bath Historical Society, Patten Free Library, Grace Episcopal Church, the Bath Garden Club, Bath Area Family YMCA. She and Gary, along with their rescue dog Lily, enjoy the beauty of the Mid coast. They have two married sons and one granddaughter.

Jim Atherton, Treasurer, grew up in Falmouth (yes, Maine) and attended Falmouth public schools. After graduation from Brown University, he spent 5 years as a US naval aviator. Following Navy service, he attended the University of Virginia where he received a master's degree in public administration.
Jim retired from the Voice of America as the budget officer and chief financial officer in 1997 after a 21-year career in Federal public service. He then became an independent consultant working with budget and financial officials for several Federal departments and agencies. He and his wife Barbara moved to West Bath in 2011 and love it here.

Jim volunteers at the Bath Area Food Bank, the Patten Free Library, and is active in the Bath Sunrise Rotary Club. He also plays bass fiddle in several local bands. He and his wife Barbara love to hike and kayak.

Raisa Bittner was born in Odessa, Ukraine and became an architect there. Dissatisfied with career advancement and life in general under Russian rule, in 1978 she took the brave step of emigrating to the USA all by herself, knowing only a few words of English, with just what she could carry on her back. Learning fast, she found work as an architect in Boston, designing the work/plan drawings for expansions and new additions for hospitals. Additionally, she did the same for town halls and large hotels. Her USA citizenship was granted in 1984, and in 1988 met Bob and they've been a couple ever since! Raisa also planned the renovation of their home in West Bath. Now retired, she enjoys all that coastal Maine has to offer. Raisa & Bob have been board members for well over 6 years.

Bob Bittner has been mostly in radio broadcasting since 1970. His first encounter with coastal Maine was as a child, when his family vacationed at Five Islands. He never forgot Maine's beauty, and ultimately returned as the new owner of Radio Station WJTO in West Bath 25 years ago. Bob has called several places home – from MA to VA, to NJ, NY, and Puerto Rico. Currently, he owns 5 AM & 5 FM listener-supported commercial-free stations, 6 of which are in Maine; and two others each, in Boston and Cape Cod, respectively. All are playing music mostly from the 40's thru 70's -- standards and pop oldies that most stations don't want to play anymore.



Annie Walker Merry grew up summers on Quaker Point where her relatives date back to 1900. Her 3 children and 2 stepchildren all attended the West Bath School. She's married to Mark Merry, a longtime teacher at Morse High School. Mark's grandfather owned "The Outpost", a popular campground in the 60's & 70's.

Annie worked at The Coastal Journal for 15 years and is very involved in the Bath community. She is a member and past president of the Rotary Club of Bath since 2005. Her passion is her work in addiction and the opioid crisis in Maine, serving on many local and state committees. Annie & Mark split their time between their home in Bath and their home Down East. She has been a member of the WBHS board for over two years.

Avery Hunt was born in NYC and spent 30 years in publishing, both as an award-winning journalist for Newsday, and an executive for Newsweek, Business Week, Esquire, and Scholastic, among others. She has also written for major magazines and newspapers throughout her long career.

In 2002 she and her late husband, Donald Meyers, moved to the coast of Maine, where she spent many childhood summers. Avery is the former president of WBHS and now primarily works on Middle Ground, for which she would love some help! She is a graduate of Wellesley College, with an English degree.

Jim Brophy was born and raised in Amherst, MA. [Note: we shared Jim's full bio in the Winter issue of Middle Ground.]

In brief, he was a geology professor at Indiana University for 35 years. He and his wife, Evelyn retired to Maine in 2019 and built a reproduction early Greek Revival house on Sabino Road. They have two grown daughters, living in the "other" Portland (OR) and Washington DC.

MEET OUR ARCHIVIST
KERRY NELSON

There are countless archival photographs among the many historical materials that Kerry has collected and documented over the years. This photo (right) is one example. It is a 1931 GMC Firetruck, purchased second hand, in 1954 by the West Bath (Volunteer) Fire Department.

Kerry was born and raised in Bath, just next to West Bath where the border ran right through the middle of the road in front of her house. Her fascination with archival works goes way back. As a kid, she loved to explore old house foundations and farmhouse dumps, looking for old bottles, tools, dishes, etc. with the neighbor kids.

She explains her evolution from childhood curiosity to a full-fledged archivist…. *"We created a "mini museum" to store our finds in an old chicken coop. One day, their dad knocked the building down because he felt it was unsafe. We lost everything. I made sure to protect my finds after that. Once I pulled up a very old wooden shoe form from a garden while picking radishes to nibble on, dirt and all. The farmer who formerly owned the home used it to repair the family shoes. I still have it.*

"Then, as a teenager, I got interested in local postcards and histories. That interest led me later to volunteer with Bath Historical Society for about 20 years, where I served in nearly every position, writing historical articles, and as the archivist for many of those years.

"In 2000, I was living my family on Sabino Road, when I got involved, along with Robin Hansen and several others, in the founding of West Bath Historical Society. I had moved to West Bath in 1984 and was already gathering information on the history of the town. I served as a trustee for years, and as archivist. I have also worked on publicity and designing publications, such as brochures and posters; helped with the Middle Ground; written historical articles; created or assisted with history programs; worked on fundraising for the Littlefield School and the Old West Bath Meeting House, and sundry other chores."

[Ed. Note: As you can see from the scope of Kerry's work, she would very much like someone(s) in the community to step up and help, especially with archival works and keeping track of local "vitals" – from birth and student achievements to marriage and death notices. And she would like that help SOON.]