



100 Year Celebration of the  
Isle La Motte Historical Society

# NEWSLETTER of the ISLE LA MOTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

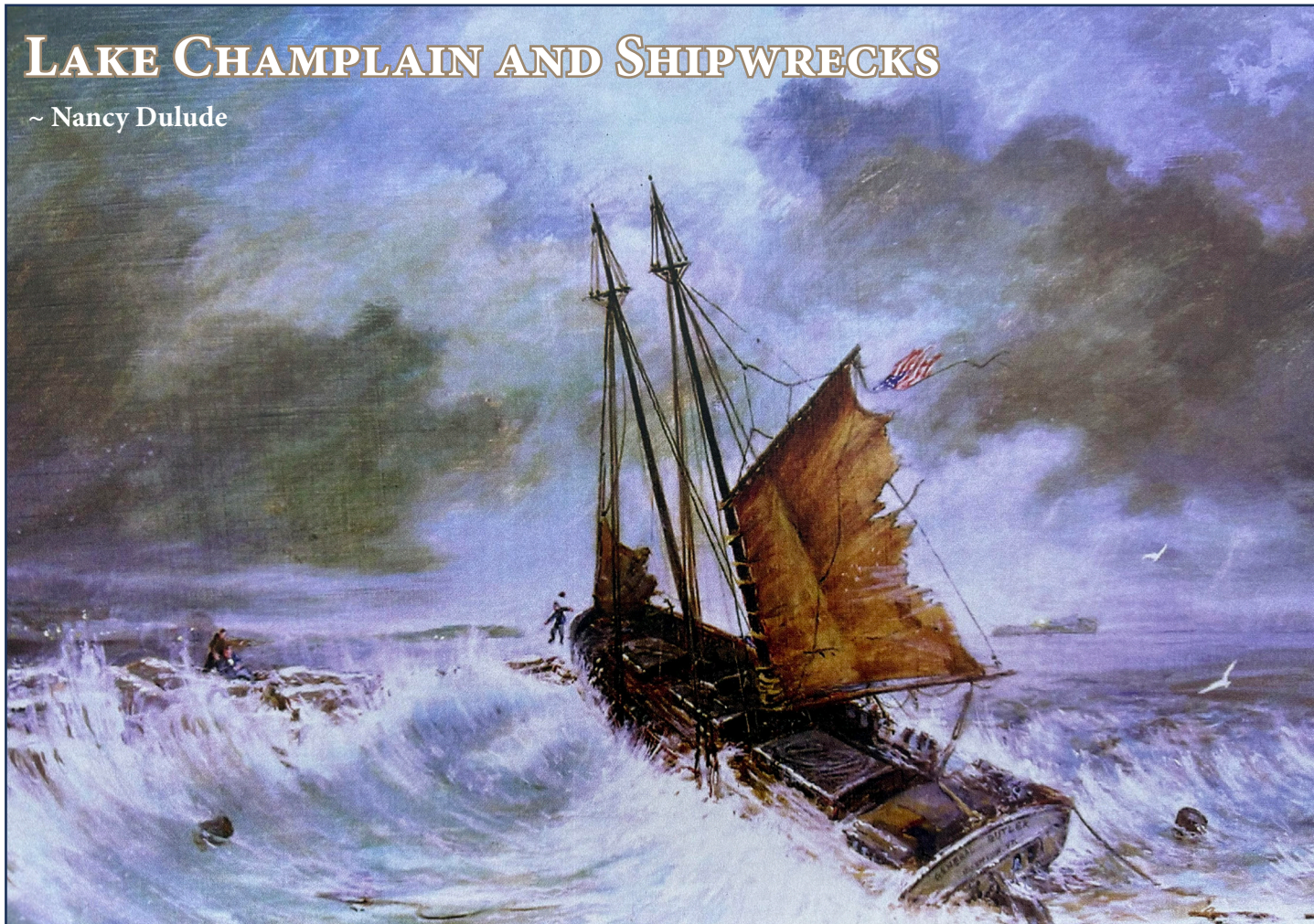
Landing Place of Samuel de Champlain - 1609 • Vermont's First European Settlement - 1666  
• The Stone Schoolhouse Museum c 1843 National Register of Historic Places

## Summer 2025 Issue

### LAKE CHAMPLAIN AND SHIPWRECKS

~ Nancy Dulude

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum



*The sinking of the General Butler by historical painter Ernest Haas.*

Last summer, we featured an exhibit highlighting a number of Lake Champlain shipwrecks with connections to Isle La Motte.

The first shipwreck involved the Gunboat *Spitfire*. It was discovered on June 6, 1997. One of fifteen American warships engaged in the Battle of Valcour Island on October 11, 1776. The *Spitfire* was the last unaccounted for American vessel within Benedict Arnold's fleet fighting against the British.

Another sunken boat found was the schooner *Sarah Ellen*, built on Isle La Motte by Hiram Fisk for his sister Sarah, in 1849. On a cold December day, Captain Henry Clay Hayward, 21, and his new bride Lucy Ann Whitney, 19, were in the process of hauling a cargo of heavy stone when the extremely cold temperatures made it very dangerous to travel. Unfortunately, near Four Brothers Islands, which is east of Willsboro, the *Sarah Ellen* began to sink  
(continued on page 2)



## Officers 2024-2025

President – Andrew R. Whipple

Vice President – Vacant

Secretary – David Schwenker

Treasurer – Krista Rowe

Curator – Ann Gemanowski

Historian – Barbara Callahan

## Trustees

Allen Barry (2027)

Peter Brzozowy (2026)

Kathryn Chaffee (2026)

Nancy Dulude (2026)

Steve Foley (2027)

Bill Henne (2026)

Michelle Jarvis (2027)

Lisa Procaccini (2027)

David Wales (2026)

Andrew R. Whipple (2027)

## Committee Chairpersons

Collections – Ann Germanowski

Exhibits – Nancy Dulude

Investments – Peter Brzozowy

Membership – Andrew R. Whipple

Nominating – Vacant

Building & Grounds – Peter Brzozowy

Newsletter Editor - Andrew R. Whipple

**If you would like to volunteer for one of the vacant Board positions or would like to be more involved in the Society (Building and Grounds or Exhibits Committee), please contact any Board member. The Board members are a group of volunteers with the goal to educate visitors about the Island's history, to preserve and protect its legacy, to learn and have FUN!**

## SHIPWRECKS

*(continued from page 1)*

quickly and the couple along with their only crewman, Joe LaPlante, were plunged into the icy waters. Only Joe was rescued by the accompanying vessel *Daniel Webster*. Sadly, Henry and Lucy drowned in the icy water.

The *General Butler* was one of the first working type boats built after the enlargement of the Champlain Canal. This boat was named after a Civil War General and built in Essex, NY. Its captain, William Montgomery, of Isle La Motte was delivering marble blocks to Burlington when the 14-year-old *General Butler* hit a massive storm in December 1876.

With Captain Montgomery were his daughters Cora and Ida, a crewman, and a neighbor, Elisha Goodsell, who was going to Burlington seeking medical attention. When the ship struck the breakwater, all five were able to get onto the breakwater to wait for help.

James Wakefield and his son Jack were the heroes of the day because they rescued all five in their small rowboat. Everyone made it safely to shore in the frigid storm, while the *General Butler* was destroyed.

Also on display with this exhibit was an original painting of the reproduction ship the *Lois McClure* by Ernie Hass and a beautiful model of the *Lyon* ship.



*The Shipwrecks exhibit.*

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

~ Andrew R. Whipple



Welcome to this edition of the Newsletter of the Isle La Motte Historical Society. Every year we bring you an update by noting the many happenings of the past year.

The Isle La Motte Historical Society is the second oldest historical society in Vermont, and our mission is to preserve the special history and unique culture of the beautiful island many of us call home.

It has been an honor and a privilege to have led the Isle La Motte Historical Society this past year. Thank you for placing your trust in me. Additionally, I would like to thank our engaged Isle La Motte Historical Society's Board of Trustees. Thank you for your service to the Society.

This was a robust year of activities at the Society and together we accomplished the following:

- We joyfully celebrated our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
  - We raised over \$6,000.00 in donations.
  - We increased our membership by over 170%.
  - We beautified and enhanced our campus landscape.
  - We enjoyed a summer season welcoming many guests to our well-developed exhibits.
  - We crafted the narrative for a historical marker and secured state approval.
- And so much more.

As I reflect on the year, one element of our organization which stands out as a particular area of pride involves our exhibits. Nancy Dulude pours her heart out creating these displays which so well capture details of our island's history. Whether it be shipwrecks on Lake Champlain, local politics, or items highlighting our local

postal service, these presentations shine. Thank you Nancy for all your efforts.

This summer we are celebrating our 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we will present a number of exhibits highlighting that fact. In the Frances Ford log cabin we have more on Frances and her family. Also, Cynthia Ritchie and her history will be highlighted.

Moreover, we are featuring Mary Montgomery, who was the first president of the Isle La Motte Historical Society, along with some history and photos of the Montgomery family. This material will be paired with other items relating to the early years. These exhibits are really the heart and soul of what we do.

Finally, the Board and I wish to thank you, our Society members, our local citizens, our partners, and the many visitors who come to enjoy and support the Isle La Motte Historical Society.

**See you soon on our campus!**



*The Isle La Motte Historical Society campus.*



# DOCENTS ON DUTY!

~ Nancy Dulude

Longtime docents Skip Barry (Trustee), Ann Germanowski (Trustee and Curator), and Barbara Callahan (Past President and Historian), along with Nancy Dulude (Trustee) meet and greet all our campus visitors.

This group of engaged Historical Society members volunteer their time, energy, and an abundance of enthusiasm for the Isle La Motte Historical Society, educating our visitors about the Island's rich culture and history. Other Board members join them when they are available to docent, as well, throughout the summer.

You can talk with them and share an Isle La Motte story of a relative, family, or friend who once lived on the Island.

The Museum is open on Saturday afternoons during July and August from 1-4 pm, but we begin to prepare for our season in the late spring by sprucing up the grounds and cleaning up the inside of the buildings. We also create new exhibits or add to our existing exhibits each year.

Have you recently retired, moved back, or plan to move back to Isle La Motte soon and want to get involved in the community? Becoming a docent is a fun way to meet others and learn about the town. We invite you to help us to ensure the Historical Society remains vibrant by increasing the number of our volunteers.



*Post Office exhibit 2024.*



*Ann Germanowski with museum guests.*



*Nancy Dulude with Barbara Callahan.*

# BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE REPORT

~ Peter Brzozowy

In the fall of 2024, with the support of the Board, the Building and Grounds (B&G) Committee solicited several bids for tree trimming around the Historical Society campus. With an eye towards preparing for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Society, we enlisted the Island Tree Service of Alburgh to remove dead, dangerous and unsightly trees.

In November, we removed several dying ash trees and the overgrown lilac bush. In addition, and of particular importance, the large tree precipitously overhanging our Society's Administration building and archives was also successfully removed.

Stump grinding and debris removal also took place. This Spring of 2025, we finished the first phase of the

clean-up and beautification project. Total Property Maintenance of Isle La Motte was engaged to remove several ill-positioned rocks and old stumps, and to brush-hog the newly opened areas of the campus.

Grading of new topsoil and reseeding was also accomplished. The abundant rainfall proved advantageous to our plans. Our campus was in tip-top form for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration held on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

The second phase, which may include a commemorative garden and a time capsule, is currently being discussed and will likely proceed along with the commemoration of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of American Independence in 2026.

## CURATOR'S MESSAGE

~ Ann Germanowski

Every new season at the Historical Society brings new and exciting projects and discoveries for the curating team. It seems that every new question we are asked to investigate concerning a facet of Isle La Motte's history becomes an opportunity to add to our Town's story. Our goal is to record those stories and our collected artifacts in a way that makes them available for future generations. Again this year, our goal is to continue to move as much of our collection as possible from a general file into our Past Perfect computer program.



*Sample of the Duba exhibit in the Blacksmith shop.*

Residents through the years have been "writing" the story of Isle La Motte for more than 200 years. Our story includes colorful characters such as Ebenezer Fisk, the town's first (and reportedly demanding) school master, Elizabeth Hubble Fisk, renowned weaving innovator and artist, and Daniel Trombly, the published poet of Isle La Motte. Their remarkable stories, and many more contemporary ones, are worth the time and effort it takes us to collect and preserve them. The Isle La Motte Historical Society's mission is to do just that!



*David Wales (left) and Nancy Dulude (right) exhibiting at the Milton Historical Society.*



# 2025 PROPOSED BUDGET

The Board has proposed the following 2025 operating budget.

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Annual Fund Drive '24/'25	\$ 5,500.00	Collections	\$ 400.00
Book and Map Sales	250.00	Exhibits	1,000.00
Donations - Unrestricted	1,000.00	100 <sup>th</sup> Celebration	2,500.00
Membership Dues	1,900.00	Operations	1,425.00
Sales - Notecards/DVDs/Stone Trivets	30.00	Property	5,050.00
Tours & Exhibit Fundraisers	100.00	Publications	2,250.00
Transfer from Investments	3,845.00		
<b>Total Operating Budget</b>	<b>\$12,625.00</b>		<b>\$12,625.00</b>

As you know, the Society's yearly operations depend upon the generous contributions from our patrons, members and visitors to the campus. Please consider making a 100% tax deductible donation to the Isle La

Motte Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit organization. Please use the membership form on Page 7.

## INVESTMENT REPORT

~ Peter Brzozowy

The Society has investments in Fidelity and Vanguard index funds. Our original goal was to invest 80% in stocks and 20% in bonds. The accounts were established in 2006 from a \$190,000 bequest from the Louise Yohe estate. The Historical Society judiciously utilized a total of approximately \$180,000 to support the 2011-2012 construction of the conservation barn, the 2020-2023 restoration of the Duba Blacksmith

Shop, and capital improvements to the Stone School House and the Frances Ford Slab-Log House.

The Fidelity investments ended June 2025 with a balance of \$121,682.78 and the Vanguard investments ended June 2025 with a balance of \$93,973.16. This leaves us with a robust balance of \$215,655.94 in our investment accounts. We are in good financial shape.

Annual Membership Form	Price	Quantity	Total US \$
Student	Free		
Single Adult	20.00		
Family (Parents & Children under 18)	30.00		
Individual Life Membership	175.00		
Unrestricted Contribution to Society.			

Total amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like a receipt? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make your check payable to “Isle La Motte Historical Society” and send it to:**

**Isle La Motte Historical Society**

**P.O. Box 18**

**Isle La Motte, VT 05463**

**Attention: Membership Chair**

Be sure to include your name, address, phone number, and email address so that we can keep you on our newsletter mailing list.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Members: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your interest in preserving the unique history of Isle La Motte.

We hope you will visit our museum and campus any Saturday 1-4 pm during July and August!



Write your answer to Mystery Photo 2025 here:

\_\_\_\_\_



The Isle La Motte Historical Society  
P.O. Box 18  
Isle La Motte, Vermont 05463



**Can you identify this photo?**

Send in your answer with your  
Membership Dues (see page 7)



## **2025 SCHEDULE:**

**Open Saturdays**  
**July and August 1 - 4 pm**  
**or by appointment**

## **ANNUAL MEETING:**

**Open to the public**

**Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 pm**  
**at the Goodsell Ridge Visitor Center**

**Speaker: Laura Trieschmann**  
**State Historic Preservation Officer**  
**Vermont Division of Historic Preservation**

*Preserving and Celebrating the History of Vermont  
with the Division for Historic Preservation*