



# Town History

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The Falmouth Historical Society

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Falmouth Heritage Museum



# What Is a Town Historical Society?

Place to go for  
“finding your roots”



Public charity providing educa-  
tional services to the community



Social group for recalling  
the “good old days”



Warehouse for displaying and  
storing artifacts and documents

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# What Do Town Historical Societies Do?

## Historic preservation

- To inform present and future generations

## Historic research

- Discovering the stories of our town's people and places

## Historic education

- Sharing the stories of our town
- Often through others

**Preservation**  
&  
**Storytelling**

*Making history fun!*

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# Falmouth Historical Society

One of 145 town historical societies in Maine

Founded 1966

All-volunteer organization

Collections housed at the Museum & Barn

- Open to the public most Tuesdays in summer (June-early October)

Expanding online presence



*Falmouth Heritage Museum  
60 Woods Road  
(next to Transfer Station)*


*Image: FHS*

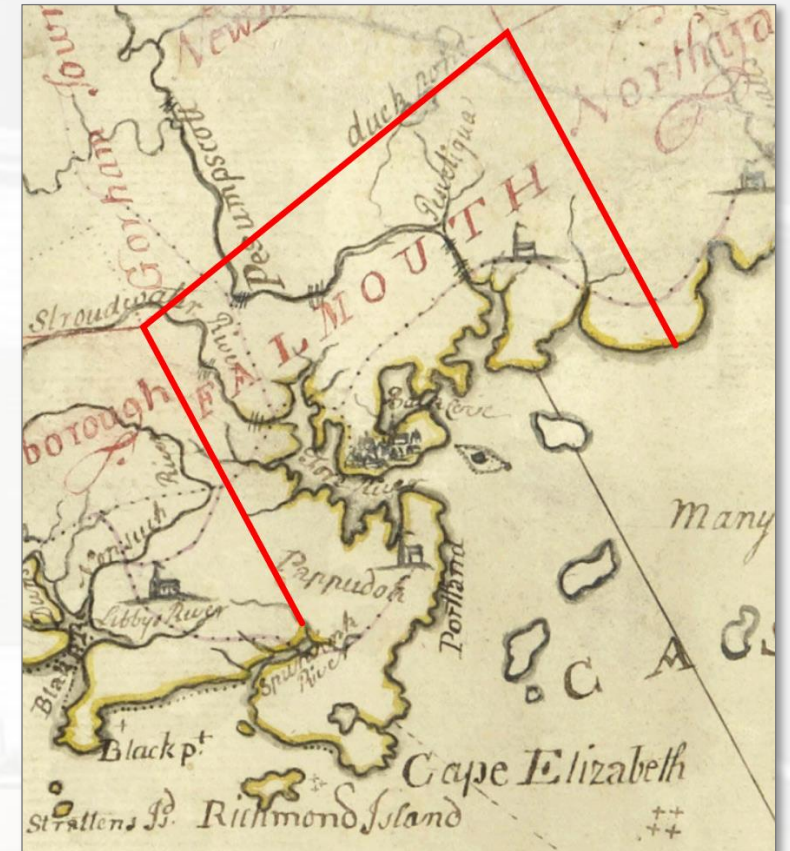
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# Ancient Falmouth Timeline

Before 1600	Aucocisco band of Wabanaki
1632-1633	First English settlement
1658	Seized and chartered by Massachusetts
1675-78	King Philip's War 
1689-97	King William's War 
1702-13	Queen Anne's War 
1713	Rechartered by Massachusetts
1765	Cape Elizabeth (with South Portland) splits off
1775-1783	Revolutionary War 
1786	Portland (Falmouth Neck only) splits off
1812-1815	War of 1812
1814	Westbrook (Saccarappa with Deering) splits off



*Colonial Massachusetts (1761)*

*Image: Osler Map Library*



# How Well Do You Know Falmouth?

## How did Falmouth get its name?

- The first English settlers were from Cornwall
- Later settlers came from Cape Cod
- The Fore River was originally named the Fall River (“Fall-mouth”)
- Settlers thought “Falmouth” was a pretty name
- It resulted from Maine being on the losing side of the Civil War



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# How Well Do You Know Falmouth?

Answer: **Maine was on the losing side of the English Civil War**

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**1652** Cromwell's Roundheads are victorious  
King Charles I is deposed  
Puritan Massachusetts decides to annex Maine

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**1658** Spurwink and Casco were the last to surrender  
Massachusetts charters a new town named Falmouth

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**1820** Maine is emancipated from Massachusetts

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*Pendennis Castle*

Pendennis Castle overlooking Falmouth, Cornwall, was the last royal stronghold to fall to Cromwell



# Community

FHS serves a broad community in Falmouth, or with connections to our town

- Residents
- Businesses
- Nonprofits
- Government
- Schools
- Press
- People from “away” with ties to Falmouth

Ancient and modern Falmouth



*FHS in Memorial Day Parade*

Image: FHS

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# Preserving History

## Your Town's Attic!

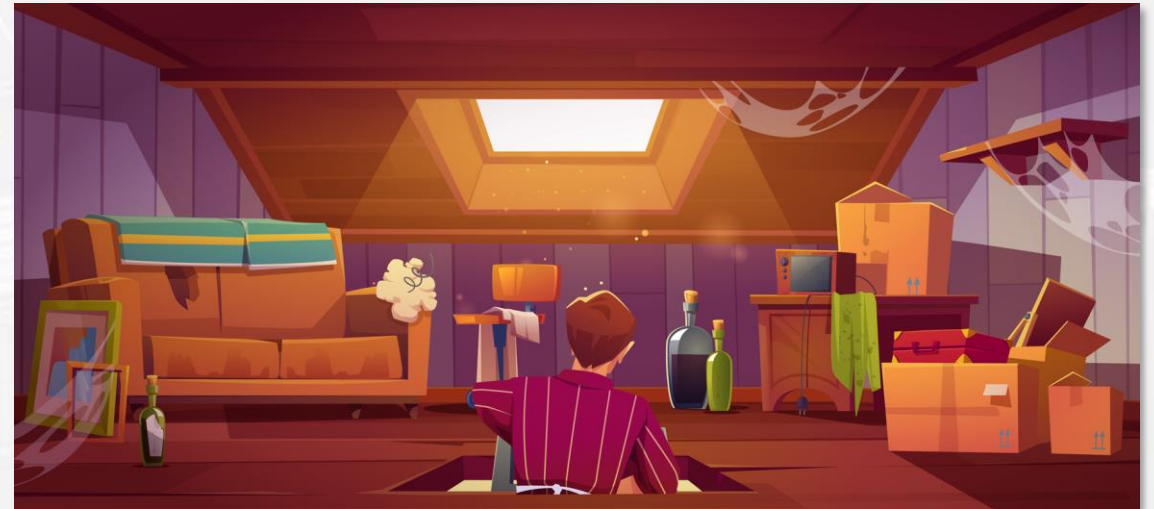
Collections include:

- Artifacts
- Documents
- Photographs
- Books, serials, maps

“Thar’s gold in them thar files!”

2021 was a bonanza when everyone cleaned house

Major effort underway to make everything discoverable via digital catalog







# Preserving History

## My Favorite Artifact

### Copybook of David Leighton

- Lived in West Falmouth (1767-1825)
- From a prominent Quaker family
- Book contains lessons while learning the business of farming and trade during the Revolutionary War
- Includes doodles



*Pages from David  
Leighton's Copybook*





# Discovering History

## History Detectives!

Research is driven by queries from our community

- Family history
- Property history
- Local history

Nearly all require research

- We have a methodology, knowledge, and our “special sauce”

This is fun!



*Image: Clipartmax*

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# Discovering History

Don't ask us to find the story of your home or family unless you are prepared for surprises

Researching one home uncovered a tragedy

- Gruesome suicide with a sword-cane!
- Gruesome murder with beheading!
- Members of family declared insane!
- Stories about the supernatural!
- Exorcism!

Exorcism must have worked

- Home is still in the same family three generations later

*News about  
the tragedy*







# Sharing History

## Storytelling!

- Visitors to the Museum
- Presentations & papers
- Responses to queries
- Online publishing

*It's hard to know where you're going  
unless you know where you've been*

*Falmouth Elementary Second  
Graders visit Museum & Barn*



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# That's What We Do



Small, dedicated team of volunteers who share an interest in history

- “Accidental historians”
- Newcomers and long-term residents

Challenges

- Upkeep of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century-fixer upper
- Finances
- Volunteers

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# History Can Be Fun!

## Join our Society!

- Even better, volunteer!
- All skills needed

## Interesting work

- Become an “accidental historian”
- Great way to learn about our town

## Nice, congenial group

- No drama
- Transparency

VOLUNTEER



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# How Well Do You Know Falmouth?

Why doesn't Falmouth have a quaint village center like many other Maine towns?



*Image: Wikipedia*

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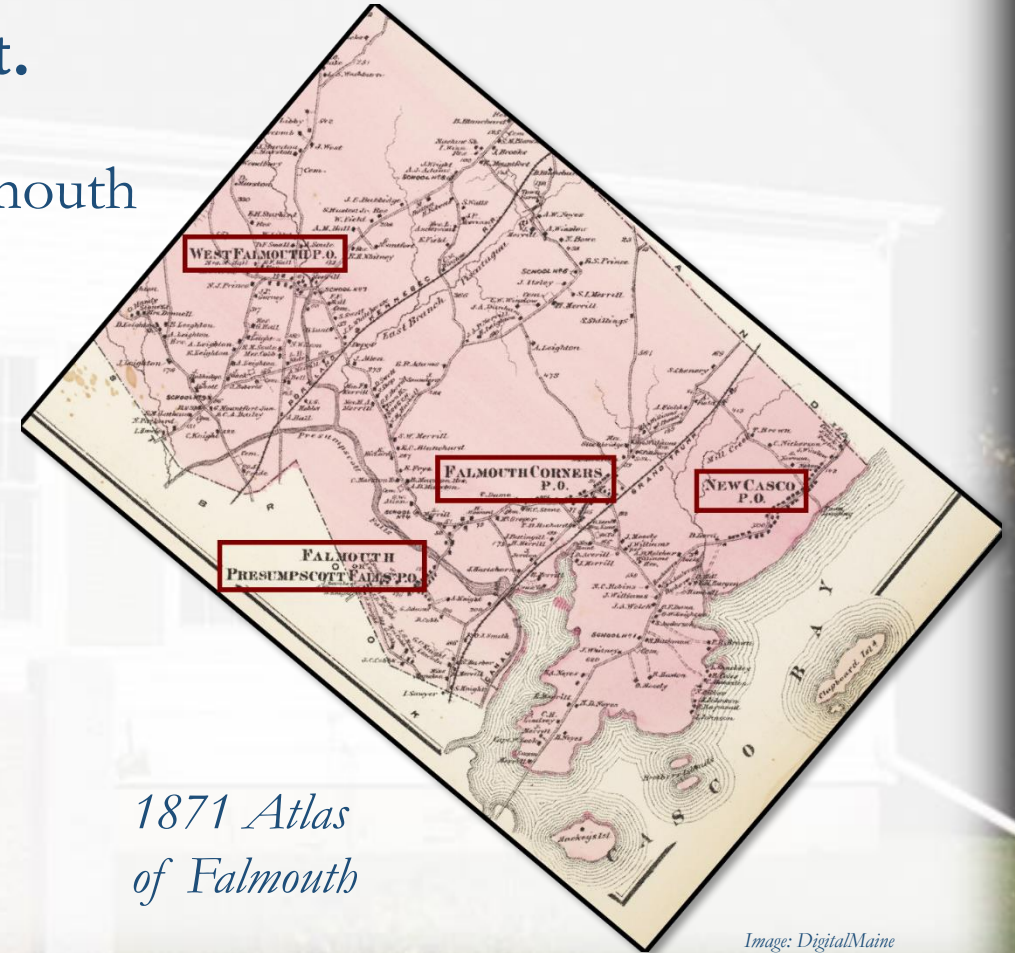
# How Well Do You Know Falmouth?

Answer: **We do! It is Portland's Old Port.**

- “Old Casco” was the commercial center of Falmouth after “Falmouth Neck” was resettled in 1716
- Falmouth Neck split off to become Portland on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1786

Falmouth became a collection of villages

- Colonial patterns of commerce persist



*1871 Atlas  
of Falmouth*

Image: DigitalMaine





# Keepers of Town History

History is big part of what makes our town special

- Draws people to live here

Four centuries of recorded history

- That's a lot of stories

Our job is to preserve and share those stories



*Pictures: George Knight House  
26 Middle Road  
Built 1726  
Top is in 1888  
Bottom is in 2019*

*Images: FHS & Zillow*

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