

The Westport Island History Committee
Welcomes you to
the 2018 House Tour

**AN ISLAND HOME:
HISTORIC HOUSES OF
WESTPORT ISLAND, MAINE**

Sunday, September 16, 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM



Tickets \$20 at the Old Town Hall

A light lunch, served at the Old Town Hall, is included.

Rest rooms are located in and behind the Town Hall

Tour sites: see Tour Map on back cover

- ① Old Town Hall (c. 1790) and Center Church (1830's)
- ② Tarbox Homestead (c. 1772-1785)
- ③ Cornelius Tarbox, Jr. House (1848)
- ④ Upper Heal Mill House (c. 1812-1835)
- ⑤ Dunton Homestead (c. 1800)
- ⑥ Sortwell Chandlery (c. 1820)
- ⑦ Greenleaf Homestead (c. 1770-1800)

THIS IS YOUR TOUR AND LUNCH TICKET

Westport Island and Its Architectural Heritage

Eleven-mile long Westport Island lies just south of Wiscasset, surrounded by the Sheepscot, Sasanoa, and Back Rivers. Known as Jeremysquam from around 1605, the island served as a trading place for local settlers and Native Americans in colonial times. Few traces remain of its earliest inhabitants, aside from some arrowheads, tools, and shell middens. The island's first land divisions were made in the 1750's, and early maps dating to 1772 and 1776 clearly show clusters of farm buildings and property boundaries. Many of the founding families are still represented on the island by their descendants, by the presence of 71 documented family cemeteries, and through persistent oral traditions and land records identifying homesteads, commercial occupations, and ways of life. Occupations on the island included logging, farming, fishing, and shipping, as well as the merchant marine; local industries were lumber and grist milling, stone and ice cutting, among others. These were the sources of prosperity that enabled the building of most of Westport's 18th and 19th century houses.

The houses selected for this year's tour are all associated with the families of settlers who first made Westport their home in the 18th century. These farmhouses – since everyone farmed the land as a basis for their existence – are built in accordance with similar rules, proportions, and materials to those found all over New England. They are no-nonsense, practical structures made to endure in the face of the elements. Houses are associated with characteristic features such as stone walls, barns and other outbuildings, mills, wharves and other waterfront structures such as stores for supplies and foodstuffs. We are not concerned here with imposing mansions like those built by land proprietors or wealthy business owners in nearby towns, but rather with a rural vernacular architecture that evolved with the changing

styles, from 18th century (Colonial) Georgian, to Federal and Greek Revival styles of the early and mid-19th century. Hallmarks of these styles can readily be identified for example in architectural pattern books by Asher Benjamin.

New England vernacular was a grass-roots architecture that served the vast majority of the early residents of coastal Maine and is still very much alive in the Cape style houses that are still being built today. The beauty, simplicity and endless variety of these buildings can easily be recognized along town and country roads throughout New England. Owners prize their pleasing shapes and subtle refinements as a visual link with the past and its taste for a restrained elegance, functionality, and clear expression.

The historic houses of Westport Island – those that survived the great fire of 1918 -- exhibit classic features of these three styles; some can be called transitional in style because they combine features of, say, both Georgian and Federal styles. Some represent the post and beam construction characteristic of the earliest structures in New England. Interior details are revealing about the intents of the owners in their relative desire to impress, on the one hand, or to present simplicity and precision of joinery on the other. The histories of these houses can be read in their architectural details as in accounts of past owners or visual records in old photographs; care and respect for the past are everywhere apparent in their lovingly preserved surroundings. Today's islanders invite you to enjoy a look at their architectural and historical heritage.



1

Old Town Hall, c. 1790 1217 Main Road



The island's historic town hall was built initially to serve as a Freewill Baptist Church, and was later used by both Baptists and Methodists. The town acquired the building in 1885 and it has served as the Town Hall ever since. Distinguishing architectural features of this Federal style building are the wooden fans in arches above exterior windows, and the curved plastered ceiling of the large interior space. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

The Center Church, 1830's 1211 Main Road



Just north of the Town Hall is the Center Church built in the 1830's in a Greek Revival Style by the prominent sea captain, James McCarty. In its original location at the corner of Sortwell and Main Roads it served as the Music Hall, and because of its central location it doubled over as an unofficial post office. In 1864 the building was moved to its present location and became the Center Church. In 1956 the new Westport Community Association took over ownership of the building and it now serves numerous community-related purposes.

2

Tarbox Homestead, c. 1772-1785

62 Tarbox Road

Owners: Jeff Tarbox and Robin Tarbox-Roland



This square-frame, one and a half story Georgian house may have been built by Cornelius Tarbox, Sr. some time between 1772 and 1785.* It is a classic example of a vernacular Cape, a type that predominates among Maine's 18th century farmhouses, with its central chimney, clapboard siding, and symmetrical façade with sidelights around the front door, the "frontispiece." The window sashes are nine over six, and the roof has the typical low pitch of other dwellings of the period. A later wing, or ell, was added on the east end. In the interior, well-preserved hallmarks of the Georgian style include finely profiled wall paneling, moldings and wainscoting. Much of the original wide-board

flooring and many paneled doors are original to the house. Beveled corner posts indicate the characteristic post and beam construction. The interior layout is according to a two-room-deep plan with three fireplace openings on the main floor. Behind the two front rooms, or parlors, is the keeping room with its carefully restored, monumental fireplace complete with bakeoven and crane for suspending cooking pots over the fire. A “borning” or birthing room, a pantry, and the original winding staircase complete the plan of the first floor.

Cornelius and Bethiah Tyler Tarbox were married in 1771 in Biddeford, ME. They moved to Westport and raised a family of eight children, most of whom were born on Westport. It is thought that Cornelius first came here to work in the lumbering industry. He was active in the island’s mills, ownership of vessels, and other seafaring activities. Although he died intestate in 1813, the farm remains in his family up to the present day. From an inventory of possessions of 1837 it is apparent that this was a large and prosperous farm. The farmhouse was uninhabited for a long period in the mid-nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the homestead with its ancient barn (likely older than the house) survives surrounded by much of its original acreage and its dynamic, working-farm setting. Authentic features abound in the outbuildings, carriage house, stone walls, fields, orchard, and old wells. Tarbox Farm currently operates as an organic farm and participates in area farmers’ markets as well as the farm-to-table program. The newly established Sasanoa Brewery is also based here.

* Two buildings appear at approximately this location on a 1772 British map; it is possible the barn is one of them.



3

Cornelius Tarbox, Jr. House, 1848

81 Tarbox Road

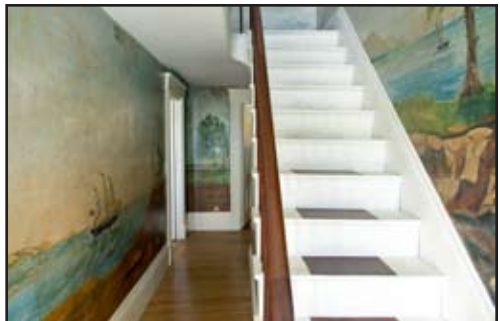
Owners: Callie and Bob Connor



Cornelius Tarbox, Jr. (1785-1858) was one of the eight children of Cornelius and Bethiah Tyler Tarbox; he was born and raised in the Tarbox Homestead situated nearby (#2). When his father died intestate in 1811, Cornelius Jr. succeeded in negotiating with his brother and siblings for acquisition of the homestead and most of its original land, including the waterfront. Not only was he a farmer on a substantial scale, but he was active in the building of ships for trade and fishing; he bought Beal Island across from Tarbox Cove as a place to graze his sheep, and also ran a store for provisions on the waterfront. In 1848, at age 64, after considerable success in his fishing and shipping businesses, he built a new house overlooking the waterfront, on Tarbox Cove. This Greek Revival Cape was meant to be a stylish, well-appointed dwelling for him and his wife, Ruth Riggs Jewett Tarbox, and their now-grown family of twelve

children. One could say it was a symbol of his success.

The house has a one and a half story elevation with ell, two tall end chimneys on the front section and one in the ell; dormers were added to both sections in around 1910. Like many houses in the Greek Revival style, it is highly symmetrical when viewed from the front, with emphatic, horizontal and vertical elements. Paired windows frame the main entrance, or frontispiece, with its articulated pilasters surmounted by a three part classical entablature with strongly projecting lintel. A central recess encloses the paneled entrance door with its showy sidelights. The knee-walled frame adds height to the façade and space to the second story. Original nine-over-six windows are preserved throughout. The exterior with its balance of heavy moldings emphasizing horizontals and verticals is almost identical to a number of houses on the island and is a type found commonly around New England. There is a lavish use of wood joinery in the interior moldings, door and window casings, and baseboards, especially in the two front parlors, which are rather ornate; plaster centerpieces appear in the ceilings of these two rooms. The house is best known for the period murals on the walls of the central stair hall. Here there are scenes of various maritime activities under a dramatic, cloudy sky that extends up the wall of the staircase to the curved second floor ceiling. Although the name of the artist is unknown, he was apparently an accomplished painter of ships and rigging. While painting in a folk art style, there is a considerable sense of naturalism and atmospheric perspective in the scenes, which include some 50 vessels.



4

Upper Heal Mill House, c. 1812-1835

394 West Shore Rd.

Owners: John Lloyd Smith, Jr. Trust; Connie Ostis, Trustee



The history of this house is connected to the various families who from the late 1700's well into the 1900's operated tide mills at the outlet of Heal Pond into Heal Cove just below the house and to those owners since the mills' closings. One of the earliest settlers on the island, Daniel Dunton owned the first mill (c. 1770) and all the land around the millpond. His family's financial interests were in logging/lumber. After 1784 two families, first the Shattucks and then the Heals, gradually took over the land while operating a gristmill and a sawmill. The Greek Revival house and barn that today preside over the former mill site were probably built by the Shattucks around 1835; Levi Heal bought the property and mill rights in 1864. From today's

causeway, the extensiveness of this mill complex can be visualized through remnants of stone foundations, remains of the old milldam, and, at low tide, stumps of numerous wooden pilings, including some that once served as a ferry landing. Another mill complex, Heal Lower Mill, operated further down the island and can be seen from the Bonyun Preserve. See www.tidemillinstitute.org for more info on tide mills.

The well-preserved, two-story house with its three chimneys has seen many changes while maintaining much of its original character. Noteworthy are its two perpendicular facades, one facing the road and the other the millpond; and they are connected in an ingenious way. The symmetrical, southwest-facing main block of the house with its heavy moldings and monumental trabeated doorway with sidelights, rounds the corner to the east side through paired pilasters, and presents a secondary entrance, with single light above the doorway and projecting lintel, all of which connects to a two-story ell with dormers. A wide frieze band runs continuously along these two sides. Interior paneled doors, door casings with distinctive corner blocks and fluted shafts, base moldings, heavy lintels, wainscoting, and mantels are of the period and exhibit Federal influence. Of special note are elegant window casings and ceiling-to-floor paneling encompassing the windows in the two front parlors. The curving staircase in the front hall is clearly an “upscale” feature. Along with the milldam remains, the barn with its huge beams, rafters and carriage parlor is well worth a look.



5

Dunton Homestead, c. 1800

74 Post Office Road

Owners: Susan and Kinne Stires



The first recorded transaction on this land was its sale to Samual Dunton by Gabriel Stone in 1797; the likely date of the present house is some time soon after. However, maps dating to the 1770's already indicate buildings on the site, possibly rudimentary structures of hewn logs or log cabins typically built by early occupants of an area. Samual's father, Timothy, was reputedly the first permanent settler on the island, from 1735. By the time the island was incorporated in 1828 the Duntons had consolidated a large tract on the peninsula west of Squam Cove. Their descendants still live on the island today. It can be assumed that this family drew its livelihood from the land and the sea, primarily in logging but also in farming and fishing. Like most of the prominent early island families, the Duntons owned or had shares in numerous fishing and merchant vessels registered

to Westport in the 19th century. The Captain Henry Dunton (d. 1860) Cemetery is located near the homestead and is included in the visit.

This handsome Georgian vernacular house sits on a knoll overlooking a broad swath of cleared fields, and is surrounded by woods in the rear. This one-hundred-acre parcel is one of the largest original land divisions on the island remaining intact. The house is a typical square-frame, story and a half, center chimney Cape, with post and beam frame. The ell has recently been rebuilt. Facing the field is a traditional five-bay façade with an entrance door framed by sidelights. An arch in low relief surmounts the doorway with its paired, framing pilasters in delicate, low profile -- a subtle Federal stylistic feature. On the interior, the joiner's work is partly authentic/original and partly carefully restored -- and somewhat showy in its details: in sashes, doorframes, fireplace breastworks, door and window casings and wainscoting. All but the keeping room floor are original to the house. The keeping room fireplace with its large firebox with crane, bakeoven, and massive mantle are evocative of the lives of early settlers, where the hearth was the heart of the home. A cluster of candlesticks (to carry upstairs to the bedrooms at bedtime) probably had its place on this broad mantle. The spiral stairway with its finely turned fruitwood (?) newel post is an early (c. 1820) replacement of what must have been a steep, narrow original. The hand pump in the galley off the keeping room indicates a "modern" touch from when water was first brought into the interior of the house.



6

Sortwell Chandlery, c. 1820

148 Sortwell Road

Owners: Barry and Margaret Castleman-Evans



This monumental, block-like building is dramatically situated on a point of land projecting into the Sheepscott River. McCarty's Landing, as the place was called, was owned by the McCarty family starting in the 1780's, and it is estimated that the Chandlery, or ship's store, was constructed around 1815-20. Several McCarty family dwellings and barns were built on the surrounding 165-acre property around this time. The old McCarty homestead overlooking the waterfront appears in an early photograph; it burned in 1923 and the fine, ashlar (granite) cellar hole can be seen to the left of the road as it approaches the waterfront. James McCarty was the owner of considerable tonnage

in vessels and was prominent in shipping and trade. This deepwater frontage was well suited for its use as a fish yard, steamboat landing and store for supplies and commodities. A fish weir and shellfish beds occupied the inner cove. The surrounding docks must have been crowded with schooners engaged in coastal activities from at least the early 19th century on, as indicated by the extensive remains of wharves and stone pilings to support decks, still very much in evidence today. Huge iron docking rings may be seen on several rocks in the vicinity.

The Chandlery's four large original rooms have been preserved with their ancient floors, beams, rafters and sheathing intact. Additional massive beams and posts have been added for support. It is presumed that the upstairs originally served as a sail loft, the main room as the store, and bedroom as a chart room. The historically sensitive owners have recently renovated the building as a six-months-a-year dwelling, making only minimal additions to the original footprint and dimensions of the building. Through the years sailors left their mark on the rafters of the old Chandlery by carving their initials, names of their ships, dates of events, etc. on the beams in the sail loft. Many tales of tragedy, hardship, and intrigue abound in the oral histories about the building and its waterfront. The reason for the romantic name given the Chandlery by family members, "My Blue Heaven," can be imagined by visitors today.



7

Greenleaf Homestead, c. 1770-1800

854 Main Road

Owners: Jan Slater and Gordon Shields



This fine example of a Georgian farmhouse is today one of the welcoming Westport Island landmarks that immediately projects the island's respect for its historic heritage. It faces the main road from a distance of 30 feet, making a clear statement about the builder's sense of importance. The likely builder, Stephen Greenleaf (1745-1813) was one of the early settlers on the island. The large land parcel was acquired by the Greenleaf family starting in 1767, and by 1799 its boundaries stretched across the island from one coast to the other. Property records show that it was a productive farm in the 1840's with at least two barns and a carriage house. At this time yields in a given

year were 10 bushels of corn, 25 of grain, 150 of potatoes; 36 pounds of wool, 160 pounds of butter, 300 pounds of pork. Greenleaf family businesses in the 19th century included a shingle machine and manufacturing shop, as well as a blacksmith shop on Greenleaf Cove, ownership of numerous vessels, and trade in fish commodities, including fish oil. That the family lived in some style in later years is indicated by ownership of a horse and carriage. There are two family cemeteries on the property.

The original contours of the four-square, Georgian farmhouse with its classic Cape design can be taken in at a glance. It is a symmetrical, center chimney, five bay farmhouse of one and a half stories with a graceful Federal main doorway, or frontispiece. Narrow, paired pilasters frame the entrance, enclosing sidelights between their shafts. These four elegant pilasters extend up to the eaves after being intersected by a full entablature, an unusual and showy touch. Interior woodwork and paneling, mantles and doors, have been preserved, along with a narrow winding staircase, probably the original. Visitors are invited to ascend this staircase to view the rooms above with their many authentic details. The well-preserved, monumental keeping room fireplace with cranes and built-in cook oven conjure up the lively activity surrounding this hearth. A closet off the front hall reveals the nook in back of the central chimney with its irregular brickwork and quirky angles.



OTHER HISTORIC FEATURES

Family Cemeteries, Barns, Wells and Well Houses, Stone Walls, Carriage Houses, Stone Wharves, Tide Mill Foundations, Dock Piers and Pilings



Barn, Heal Mill House



Well House,
Cornelius Tarbox, Jr. House



Barn, Greenleaf Homestead



Samuel Tarbox Family Cemetery



Mooring Ring, McCarty Cove



Heal Upper Tide Mill Foundations,
Heal Cove

THOSE WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE...

Sponsor: Westport Island History Committee, Jeff Tarbox, chair
2018 House Tour Subcommittee, Westport Island History Committee:
Judy Hughes and Callie Connor, co-chairs, Ruth Nelson, Sally Howe,
Gaye Wagner, Carole Dunbar, Ann Springhorn, Tania Hayes

House Owners: Margie and Barry Evans, Jan Slater and Gordon Shields,
Jeff Tarbox, Connie Smith Ostis, Susan and Kinne Stires, Callie and Bob
Connor

**Traffic Safety and Parking: Roger Higgins and the Westport Volunteer
Fire Department**

Volunteers and Resource People -- Thank you island residents: Emily
Adler, Brad Adler, Alexa Abbott, Jason Abbott, Mary Ellen Barnes, Carol
Blake, Paul Bonyun, Anna Castleman, Kyle DePietro, Dick Barker, Sandy
Besecker, Gerald ("Jerry") Bodmer, Lee Bodmer, Joan Bradford, Julie
Casson, Jill Cooney, Bill Cooney, Mary Coventry, Richard Coventry, Deb
Crawford, Donna Curry, Scott Daniels, Dennis Dunbar, Margie Gould,
Jon Gould, Dedee Greenleaf-Hodgdon, Ann Hoffman, E.C. Hoffman,
Shea Huchowski, Stacey Hutcheson, Joanna Jacobs, Lee Junker, Tony
Junker, Bob Kamman, Deb Lorensen, Patti Mendes, Amy Mussman,
Ross Norton, Lisa Paige, Ely Pierce, Judy Pierce, George Richardson,
Joan Sartoris, Gordon Shields, Meg Skidmore, Phoebe Slater, Susan
Sorrentino, Bob Springhorn, Karen Stanton, Neil Stanton, Cora Tarbox,
Janet Thompson, Lorraine Tredge, Gaye Wagner, Debbie Williams

Refreshments and Flowers: Louana Frois, with the help of Susan
Coulombe of *Simply Susie's Catering*, and Tonia Clark of *Posies in the Pines*

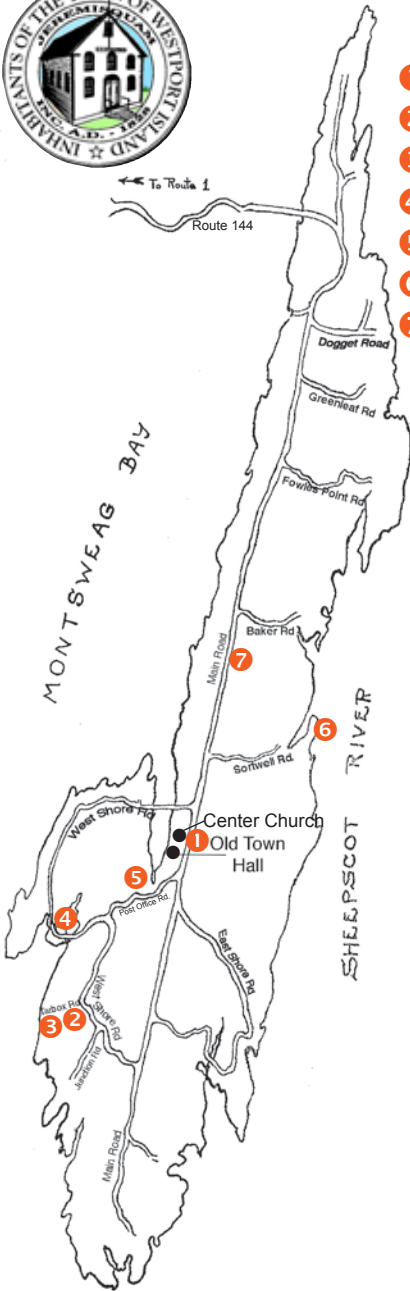
Publicity: Mary Coventry, Mary Ellen Barnes, Gaye Wagner

Maps and Exhibits: Dennis Dunbar and Gaye Wagner

Photography: Gaye Wagner

Brochure: Jan Slater and Callie Connor

Printing by Lincoln County Publishing Company, Newcastle/
Damariscotta, ME, with special thanks to Laurie McBurnie



- 1 Old Town Hall, Center Church
- 2 Tarbox Homestead
- 3 Cornelius Tarbox, Jr. House
- 4 Upper Heal Mill House
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- 6 Sortwell Chandlery
- 7 Greenleaf Homestead

After John and Louise Swanton, *Westport Island, Maine, once Jeremy Squam*