



Friends of the Winn House

Newsletter

Spring 2007

The Ogunquit Heritage Museum, 86 Obed's Lane, Ogunquit, Maine
www.ogunquitheritagemuseum.org Phone: 207 646-0296

The Mission of the Ogunquit Heritage Museum is to Preserve and Share the History and Culture of Ogunquit.

The Ogunquit Playhouse: 75 Years of a Very Famous Theatre

by Susan Meffert

The year 2007 is the 75th anniversary of the opening of the Ogunquit Playhouse. Actually, if you count Mrs. Hoyt's annual pageants and productions, this has been a theatre town for even longer. The Playhouse has survived where many others have succumbed to rising costs and, generally, the American love affair with television and movies.

It began as the dream of a very determined showman named Walter Hartwig. Hartwig believed that good theatre was possible outside of New York and that if you put on good material with highly professional people, audiences would come. He brought with him to Ogunquit a very accomplished resident company—one that he had started building in Peterborough, NH in 1927, and in Bristol, CT, during 1930 and 1931. Critics and journalists from Portland, Boston and New York called Hartwig an indefatigable entrepreneur, an old fashioned gentleman, and a visionary. Certainly, he brought early fame to Ogunquit with appearances by theatrical luminaries like Ethel Barrymore, Leo G. Carroll, Maude Adams, Laurette Taylor, Carl Benton Reid, and Peggy Wood. When Grover Perkins' garage, later the Ogunquit Square movie theatre, that he had built into a theatre and opened in 1933, became too small for his successes, he bought a tract of land from Henry

Weare that stretched from Route One to Shore Road, and built a marvelously ahead-of-its-time playhouse that opened on July 19, 1937, with a production of "Boy Meets Girl." From the point of view of posterity, this theatre was probably the town's second big break, the first being Hartwig's arrival.

When Walter Hartwig died suddenly in 1941, there was no question but that his widow, Maude, a dedicated partner in all of his theatrical

endeavors, would carry on. So we have Maude Hartwig to thank for the fact that there is a theatre at all. She kept it going through WW II and was there to include John Lane as a young actor in her resident company of 1946.

Then John Lane decided to be a producer instead of an actor, another big break for the town. So he bought the playhouse from Maude Hartwig during the winter of 1951—after the hurricane of November 1950 sheared the top off the stage house and smashed it into the auditorium. John and his wife, Helen, moved to Maine and became wonderful residents of Ogunquit; and he, with her help and support, proceeded to turn the property that Hartwig had built, into a showplace. Lane's mission was quality plays, good actors and actresses, a professional backstage operation. He and his staff always treated the talent as if they were honored guests—a tactic



Aerial view of the Ogunquit Playhouse taken about 1964. The Colony Theatre is at top center with red roof. (Photo courtesy of Susan Meffert)

From the Bridge . . .

As we head to press for this edition, Spring is just beginning to join us—finally after a long winter. As I think of Spring, I am reminded of renewal and rejuvenation—flowers bloom, our many visitors return and we all look forward to the sunny warmth of Summer.

This spring, the Friends of the Winn House are undertaking an exciting journey—we are deep into Strategic Planning and thinking of how to best serve the Ogunquit Heritage Museum. Our commitment to you is to be the stewards of your generosity and to help make the Ogunquit Heritage Museum a celebration of the art, architecture, families, attractions and history that we all have fallen in love with. Strategic Planning will help us prepare to grow and will give the Friends direction at this critical juncture. I invite you to share your thoughts with your Board of Directors and to ask us questions as we journey through this exciting time. Communication on your expectations is important and we value each insight into our membership.

As we grow, we realize the importance of community involvement to the Ogunquit Heritage Museum. To increase this sense of community, the Friends of the Winn House would like to grow the interaction of our members. I encourage you to join our Antique Show or Opening Party committees and, with only a few hours of time, help share and develop the Ogunquit Heritage Museum. Please ask me directly how to become involved—your talents are a wonderful way to support the Museum. As I wrote last fall, from set up to take down, there are many ways to help!

Spring—renewal, growth, change. For the Friends of the Winn House, this spring is about opportunity and a wonderful time to continue to show your support for our local history. So here's to spring and the celebration of Ogunquit!

Allyson Cavaretta, President
207-646-9661



Perkins Cove Footbridge, ca. 1880

Charting Ahead

Gala Opening Reception
Wednesday May 30 2-5 p.m.
Especially for Members of
Friends of the Winn House and
Supporters
Elegant Refreshments

**33d Annual Ogunquit Antiques
Show & Sale.** Saturday and Sun-
day, September 15 and 16, at the
Dunaway Center, School Street,
Ogunquit.

Museum to Open June 1st

The Museum will open for its 7th season
on Friday June 1 at 1:00 p.m.

Regular hours will be
Tuesday through Saturday 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Friends of the Winn House *Board of Directors*

Allyson Cavaretta, *Chair*
Jim Nadeau, *Vice Chair*
Bernadine Speers, *Secretary*
Susan Meffert, *Treasurer*
Henry Hokans
J. Norman Wilkinson
Barbara Woodbury



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Peter R. Woodbury, *Editor*

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Curator's Report . . .

We are about to start our 7th season and we invite everybody to come and share our unique Ogunquit history. The winter has passed and now we can 'think spring.'

This year the museum will have a special exhibit celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Ogunquit Playhouse. This exhibit will be in the 'Do You Remember?' Room and will feature old programs, photos, posters, paintings and some interesting items loaned to the Museum. We invite the members of the Friends and all our supporters to the opening reception, May 30, 5-7 PM. Join us and catch a first glimpse of this special exhibit.

Our other new exhibit is a fishing shack. The shack was designed by Carole Lee Carroll and built by Gary Littlefield. It will be filled with all those necessities for lobstering, and fishing. It is dedicated to the Cove fishermen, from yesteryear to today.

A colorful painting by Phil Richards was donated to the museum by the Hillcrest Resort. Phil used to own the Hillcrest and offered art lessons on the front porch. It is a great addition to the art room. The Hillcrest generously refurbished and framed it for hanging.

Our 18th century gardens are being cared for by Marla McCurdy and Dianne Forrest. They weed and plant and make things look beautiful. Thank you so much. If others would like to help with this effort, I'm sure our gardener volunteers would appreciate your assistance.

Paula Cummings will be back this summer as Museum Administrator. Paula always brings us so much knowledge about Ogunquit and answers all your questions. She will gladly help you find information in our new vertical and photo file. We are collecting all the information we can find about Ogunquit. We thank Dr. Ruth Endicott Freeman for all the newspaper clippings. If you have any photos or information, we would be glad to add it to our files or make copies.

I hope to see you on May 30th. Your support helps make our Museum a special place. Money raised by the Friends support our exhibits, educational programs and preservation of our archives to keep them safe and secure, for future generations.

Barbara Woodbury
Curator

Two Historic Views of the Ogunquit Playhouse



The Hartwig Theatre at Ogunquit Square July 22, 1934, where Maude Adams appeared in "Twelfth Night." On this occasion Miss Adams and the company were about to leave for a road tour. (Photo by David O. Woodbury)



Cornelia Otis Skinner played in "Madam Sans Gene," ("Madam Without Care") in this 1938 matinee which was sold out! (Photo courtesy of Carole Lee Carroll.)

Special Strategic Planning Committee



Currently engaged in strategic planning sessions for the Friends of the Winn House are these members: (Left to right) Richard Littlefield, Marilyn Eimon, Mike Horn, Bob Joyner, Pete Woodbury (guest), Allyson Cavaretta, and Jim Nadeau. Seated is Gary Littlefield. Missing: Bobby Treen. (Photo by Curator Barb Woodbury).

Membership Rolls . . .

Builder

Jonathan & Bernadine Speers
Blanche H. Staples

Benefactor

Rep. Dawn Hill & Mr. James Nadeau

Sponsor/Business

Norman & Marcia Beal Brazer
Peter and Barbara Woodbury

Patron/Business

Dave O. Adams
Adrian & Ellie Asherman
The Beachmere Inn
Muriel Brazer
John M. Cavaretta & Randal S. Coulton
Robert E. & Karen J. Hanson
Jonathan's Restaurant
Lois P. Mack
Paul & Winifred Mason
P. A. & L. P. Mason
Mary Leigh Smart
Meadowmere Resort
Moore's Sparhawk Corp
Paul & Ruth Sampson
JoAnne S. Tomao
William & Bernice C. Tower, Jr.
Jonathan West

Family/Dual

Ralph & Nancy Davison
Beverlee & Scott Drury
Jordan & Muriel Freedman
James & Julie Habas (DDS)
Ray & Kay Hamlin

Family/Dual (Cont.)

Henry & Louise Hokans
Michael & Helen Horn
Susan Levenson
Richard & Mary Littlefield
Lyman & Patricia Pope
Dorothy P. Robinson
Gene E. Sengstock
Jay S. & Jean L. Smith
Harold & Betty Staples
Bernard & Elaine Stein
Steve & Julie Twombly
Margaret Upton
Yorke Associates
George H. & Joan A. Yorke, Jr.

Single

Sally H. Alexandre
Wyatt Littlefield Baker
Marena & Robert Bragg
Roger W. Brown
Paula S. Cummings
Arnie Ginsberg
Beverly Hallam
Susanne J. Heckaman
Barbara Hilty
Ann S. Hunnicutt
Arthur S. Littlefield
Zana M. Littlefield
Deborah J. Marathon
Susan D. Meffert
John Miller
The Whistling Oyster
Betty Staples
Michael B. Staples
Linda & Stephen Williams

Student/Senior

Diana Abbott
Eleanor L. Adams
Robert M. & Erika Becker
Fran & Ray Bruning
Charles & Eileen Dahill
Judith Dineen
Sybil W. DuPuis
William Eaton
Margarette Florentino
Norman & Nancy Fording
Jeanne F. Gagne
Frank J. Glazier
Nancy Glendenning
John & Catherine Goodwin
Michele Hovde
Lorraine Latulippe
Ryna M. Lipkind
Marjorie E. Littlefield
Anthony & Noreen Maurno
Deborah S. Meigs
Charlotte A. Moody
Evelyne Neill
Madelene S. Nowell
Robert L. & Helene Rutledge
Dolores Q. & Grover A. Strauss
Virginia E. Tank
Hazel Wambaugh
Bruce & Jean Wallace-Fearon
Raymond E. & Suzanne G. Wiggins
Norman & Dorothy Wilkinson

Playhouse, (from page 1)

that has been well remembered by many of the actors who appeared here, and undoubtedly, contributed to their willingness to return.

Another unusual characteristic of John's management was his meticulous attention to the physical plant as well as the product. When the nature of summer theatre changed to a star package system, he was active in the development of that system, and began to package his own material and arrange for shows that would travel a circuit of five or six theatres during one season. This certainly helped the Playhouse to reign in costs at a time when other summer theatres couldn't keep up and still make a profit. Lane's stewardship of the Playhouse lasted from 1951 until 1996—45 years. The early decades are universally acknowledged now as the heyday of the straw-hat circuit.

The rest of the story is better known to us these days. Henry Weller and Mort Mather, with the help of then-producer Rob Townsend, raised

\$500,000 as an endowment and John Lane gave the Ogunquit Playhouse to the town to be run by a foundation with a board of directors. Since 1996, when the town bid farewell and thank you to John Lane at a wonderful gala including many of the notable stars who had graced the stage here during the previous 45 years, the Playhouse has continued to flourish. We've had two artistic directors, Roy Rogosin, who is remembered for his contribution to the children's theatre as well as his successful musical seasons, and now, Bradford Kenney, who joined the theatre as artistic director last year, the first year the season was extended beyond the ten weeks of high summer.

The occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Ogunquit Playhouse will be celebrated in many ways this summer. All of these celebrations should be reminders to us of how fortunate the town has been in the perpetuation of this marvelous theatre.