

John and Pearl Murphy came home from a day of fishing in 1925 to find the frame of their new home. The builder of this 12 by 15 foot house was their neighbor and friend Charlie Gomes, a boatbuilder well-known throughout the Midcoast. The Murphy house, with its boat planks for floorboards, would sit close to the road in the village of Sebasco for the next 77 years.

The small house original had two rooms--one upstairs and one down. The family covered the interior walls with various layers to keep out the drafts, including newspaper, flour bags and wallpaper wrapped around the frames. The Murphys' three sons used a ladder-like stair to reach their beds under the eaves. Eventually two small additions would be constructed, including a kitchen.

The Murphys' circumstances were typical for many families in the fishing villages of Phippsburg during the 1920s and 30s. Although their home and means were modest, the family was a pious one as well as a musical one. Old photographs show their living room full of musicians as likely as not playing the kind of country gospel songs that one son, Ivan, would later record.



In 2002 owner Rink Varian wanted to demolish the house and build a rental cottage. He generously gave the Historic Preservation Commission time to save the house, which was moved to a temporary location with donations of labor, supplies and expertise from many townspeople. At its new permanent location the little Murphy house will be in a unique position to illustrate the daily life of fishing families in the early decades of the 20th century.

*From the top:* The Murphy house in Sebasco, John Murphy, and the Murphy family at home (1960).

## Phippsburg Historical Society

The first annual meeting of the Phippsburg Historical Society, in August of 1961, was a celebration of the efforts of dedicated Phippsburg folks who felt that the town's rich shipbuilding heritage was well worth the effort to document and preserve.

Since that time, the Society has opened its little museum each summer, and thousands of visitors have enjoyed a view of early Phippsburg, done genealogical research or just relived old times. In 1992 an addition to the museum was dedicated to the life of Jane Poliquin. With support from members and a bequest from the Simonatis family another much need addition with modern facilities was constructed in 2007. The Society has published several books exploring the history of the town.

The organization's purpose is to cultivate social intercourse and friendship among its members; collect and preserve data touching the history of Phippsburg, the Phippsburg area, Sagadahoc County and the State of Maine; collect and preserve articles, specimens, material and objects illustrative and demonstrative of the customs, modes and habits of former times; perpetuate the memory of those who, by their labors and heroism, contributed to make the history of the area; and to compile, write and publish a history of the Town of Phippsburg and/or the Phippsburg area.

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## Phippsburg Historic Preservation Commission

The Historic Preservation Commission was established in 2000 by the Selectmen in response to the demolition of the Square House in Small Point. As part of the town's government the commissioners are appointed by the Selectmen.

The Demolition Delay Ordinance was adopted in 2001 to provide a period of up to 45 days before a structure in Phippsburg can be demolished. In 2002 the Commission received a grant to undertake a "windshield" survey of all structures in town more than 50 years old. Public programs and resources for property owners and townspeople are among the ways the Commission works to raise awareness and understanding of the important historic resources in the town.

The Commission meets the second Monday of the month at 3:00 at the town hall. The public is always welcome.



## Support the Murphy House Project

- ☐ \$25  
☐ \$50  
☐ \$100  
☐ \$500  
☐ \_\_\_\_\_ *other*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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email \_\_\_\_\_

Donations are tax-deductible.

Please make checks payable to  
Phippsburg Historical Society/Murphy House.

Phippsburg Historic Preservation Commission  
1042 Main Road Phippsburg, ME 04562

*Thank You!*



### *Can you help?*

- moving and restoring the house
- collecting photographs and stories from the fishing communities of Phippsburg
- donate old fishing gear

*For more information contact Merry Chapin  
at 443-5669 or mchapin23@yahoo.com*

**Phippsburg Historical Society**  
**Parker Head Road**  
**Phippsburg, ME 04562**

The museum is open from the last week in June  
through September, Monday-Friday 2-4 pm.

## Celebrating Phippsburg's Fishing Heritage

The John Murphy house is to be added to the historic collection of the Phippsburg Historical Society. Built in 1925 in Sebasco by boatbuilder Charlie Gomes, the building will be restored by the Phippsburg Historic Preservation Commission and with town approval moved to its new location next to the Museum in the old Center School.

The little house will help tell the history of the fishing families of Phippsburg; their rich maritime heritage, musical traditions, and village life.

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