

---

# The Midcoast Inquirer

Newsletter of Midcoast Senior College  
December 2017, Volume 13, No 1



---

## Reflecting Back and Looking Ahead

The year 2018 marks Midcoast Senior College's eighteenth year of providing non-credit academic courses and other educational events for people over fifty to continue their lifelong learning. MSC founders Jack Thompson and Nancy Wheeler were true visionaries.

The holiday season is an appropriate occasion to reflect upon our past successes. Even more, it's a time to look ahead – to anticipate the challenges and opportunities of a new year. Our mission remains: to sustain an educational institution that helps people continue lifelong learning.

The results of the past year support my belief that Midcoast Senior College is well prepared to meet future challenges. More courses were offered, and more students took courses, during the spring and fall semesters than ever before. MSC Bylaws were reviewed and updated by the Policy Committee and approved by the board. Three new members joined the Board of Directors.

We will continue to keep three guiding principles in mind. First, we will be a "personal" senior college – one that treasures outstanding classroom teaching, recognizes the value of our volunteers, and welcomes change while creating a sense of community for all its members.

Second, we will continue to provide affordable, high-quality classes and lectures. There has not been a tuition increase in recent memory even though costs to meet our mission have increased. It is time to look realistically at our revenue and expenses, and compare them to our current and future offerings.

And third, we will respond to the needs of our students. Just because "it's always been done that way" is no reason to continue a practice. Is it time to offer online learning opportunities to people who cannot travel to MSC classrooms?

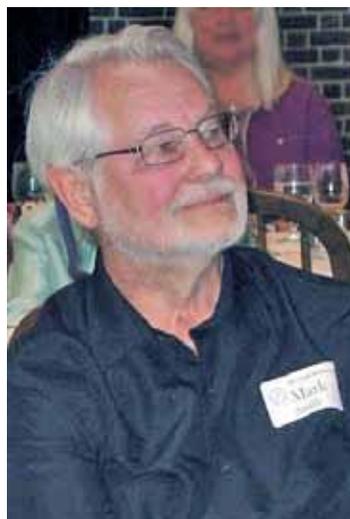
These principles, and our resolve to support them with goodwill and enthusiasm, will enable us to con-

Continued on Page 2: Looking Back

## Founders Award

The Wheeler-Thompson award, presented annually to a member of MSC who has made significant contributions to the organization over the years, went in 2017 to former MSC president Mark C. Smith.

Mark Smith has been a longstanding member and contributor to MSC, where he served as president (2009-13) and, in the words of one recommender, "managed the evolution of the College from a 'mom & pop' organization to one with academic rigor." He played a key role in the move of offices and classrooms from Bath to Brunswick. Mark also chaired the committee on the transition to independent stature and created the Wheeler-Thompson Award. He graduated from Wil-



liams College in 1963 and received advanced degrees from Harvard and Columbia universities. After forty years in secondary-school teaching and administration (school superintendent in New Jersey and Massachusetts), Mark and Judy retired to Brunswick, Maine, in 2003. He is active in the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Brunswick. Congratulations, Mark! And, thank you!

## Mission Statement of the Midcoast Inquirer:

The Midcoast Inquirer articulates the academic spirit and educational mission of Midcoast Senior College to offer lifelong learning for older adults. To this end, we provide a bulletin board that announces course offerings, lectures and special events, and a literary forum (or virtual classroom) of essays, reviews, interviews and commentaries written by faculty and students.

*--Robert C. Williams, Editor*

The Midcoast Inquirer

is the newsletter of
Midcoast Senior College
10 Tibbetts Drive, Suite 210
Brunswick, Maine 04011
midcoastseniorcollege.org
(207) 725-4900

msoffice@midcoastseniorcollege.org

Board of Directors.

Officers:

- President: James Wilkes
Immediate Past President: Tony Belmont
Vice President: Doug Bates
Treasurer: Ervin Snyder
Secretary: Lynn Lockwood

Other Board Members and Committees:

- Mort Achter At-large
Doug Bates Development
Tony Belmont Nominating
Bianca Chambers Public Relations
Clare Durst Technology
Ron Golz Development
Cynthia Little Development
Lynn Lockwood Administration
Victor Papacosma Curriculum
Ervin Snyder Finance
Linton Studdiford Curriculum
Kelly Watt Special Events
James Wilkes Policy
Bob Williams Administration

Sub-Committees

- Winter Wisdom: Reg Elwell
Summer Wisdom: Richard Neiman
Volunteers: Dorothy Bell
Newsletter: Bob Williams; Burr Taylor
Website: Jack Henderson
Current Events Forum: Richard Neiman
Special Events: Kelly Watt

Office Administration: Donna Marshall

Midcoast Senior College is one of seventeen Senior Colleges in the State of Maine. We serve the area from Freeport to Waldoboro and inland up to Augusta. Most of our classes are held at 10 Tibbetts Drive, Brunswick, Maine. This past Fall we offered 33 courses and enrolled 590 students into 750 spots. Class schedules and The Midcoast Inquirer are available on our web site for each semester. Students may also register on line at midcoastseniorcollege.org.

Continued from Page 1: Looking Back

tinue to be a strong learning center, one fully responsive to the changing needs of our community.

By seizing the opportunities before us, we can be architects of change, not victims. And with the support of the many friends of MSC, we will face the New Year proud of our tradition, confident of our ability, and optimistic about our future.

James Wilkes, President

Mapping Brunswick

Jym St. Pierre

As part of the Winter Wisdom lecture series last January, I presented a whirlwind look at Brunswick through the lens of five hundred years of maps. History shows that Midcoast Maine has hosted native people, explorers, settlers, farmers, scholars, industrialists, immigrant mill workers, military heroes, and religious and political leaders for five centuries.

The area we now call Brunswick has been located on maps on two continents, at least one Native American territory, two empires, two nations, four provinces, at least five land grants, one Crown colony, one Dominion, two states, one commonwealth district, two counties, one township, and one town. Brunswick as a town (1739) has existed longer than the United States and most other countries.

By the time of contact between the Old and New Worlds in the sixteenth century, the Wabanaki still had encampments along the coast and rivers here. Early charts reflect European exploration, but there was little effort at settlement. Relations deteriorated from cautious curiosity to hostility when Old World captains kidnapped or killed native people.

In the early seventeenth century, speculators sent waves of explorers in search of a city of gold and silver believed to be in Maine's Midcoast region. Charts, based on expeditions sent from France, Spain, and England, often label our region the mythical Norumbega.

The first European settler here was Thomas Purchase, a fisher, farmer, trapper, and trader, who arrived from England around 1628. He secured a patent to Pejepscot (the current Brunswick, Topsham and Harpswell), which was then the frontier. Purchase traded with the locals, but he also helped start a war. The natives feared he was taking over their territory and cheating them in fur trades. In 1675, they burned his house forcing him to flee to Massachusetts. In 1699, the

Continued on Page 3: Mapping

Continued from Page 2: Mapping

Treaty of Mere Point was signed. Intended to end the war between the indigenous peoples and the occupying Europeans, the treaty brought only a brief calm.

European settlement along the Midcoast restarted early in the eighteenth century as the English attempted to secure their land titles. In 1714, after the Treaty of Utrecht ended decades of war between France and Britain, the Pejepscot Proprietors, a land company comprised of eight merchants, began acquiring the holdings of earlier owners and settlers. Particularly significant was the area sold by Richard Wharton, a Boston merchant, who had acquired Thomas Purchase's claim. In 1717, Brunswick got the name that has lasted three hundred years when it was chartered as a township.

Eighteenth-century maps show the Twelve-Rod Road connecting Maquoit Bay to the falls on the Androscoggin. Known to us now as Maine Street, the road was laid out in 1717 to be twelve rods wide so travelers would always be about one hundred feet from trees to reduce the chance of ambush. (A rod was 16.5 feet.) A few years later, the Pejepscot Proprietors set aside one thousand acres for a town common. The mapping of a main road and a town commons represent some of the earliest urban planning in Maine.

After another Indian raid in 1722 depopulated Brunswick Township, new families moved in, many of them Protestant Ulster-Scots imported from Northern Ireland to fight off French Catholics and so-called savage Indians pressing from the east and north. Topsham was Brunswick's line of defense. Maps show the first Brunswick meetinghouse was built on the Twelve-Rod Road in 1735, halfway between the falls and the bay.

One of the settlers in the new township of Brunswick, eight-year-old Matthew Thornton, fled with his parents



Brunswick as shown in Cyprian Southack's map of Casco Bay in 1764.

Osher Map Library, Portland ME.

when their house on Maquoit Bay was burned in the 1722 attack. He landed in New Hampshire where he became a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Today, he is celebrated as a nearly native son of Brunswick. Thornton Oaks retirement community is named for him.

One map commissioned by the Pejepscot Proprietors could be considered part of the birth certificate of the Town of Brunswick. On February 4, 1739, according to the new style of reckoning the calendar, Brunswick became the eleventh incorporated town in Massachusetts' District of Maine.

A major event in Brunswick's history at the end of the eighteenth century was the creation of Bowdoin College in 1794. By the time Moses Greenleaf revised his 1815 Map of the District of Maine and republished it as a Map of the State of Maine in 1820, Bowdoin College was well enough established to be the only feature shown in Brunswick on the map.

Everything changed in 1849 when the railroad arrived in downtown Brunswick. Logging receded, agriculture continued, industrial and educational development picked up, and wooden shipbuilding was big. Hundreds of Brunswick residents fought in a not very Civil War. Then tourism began to flourish.

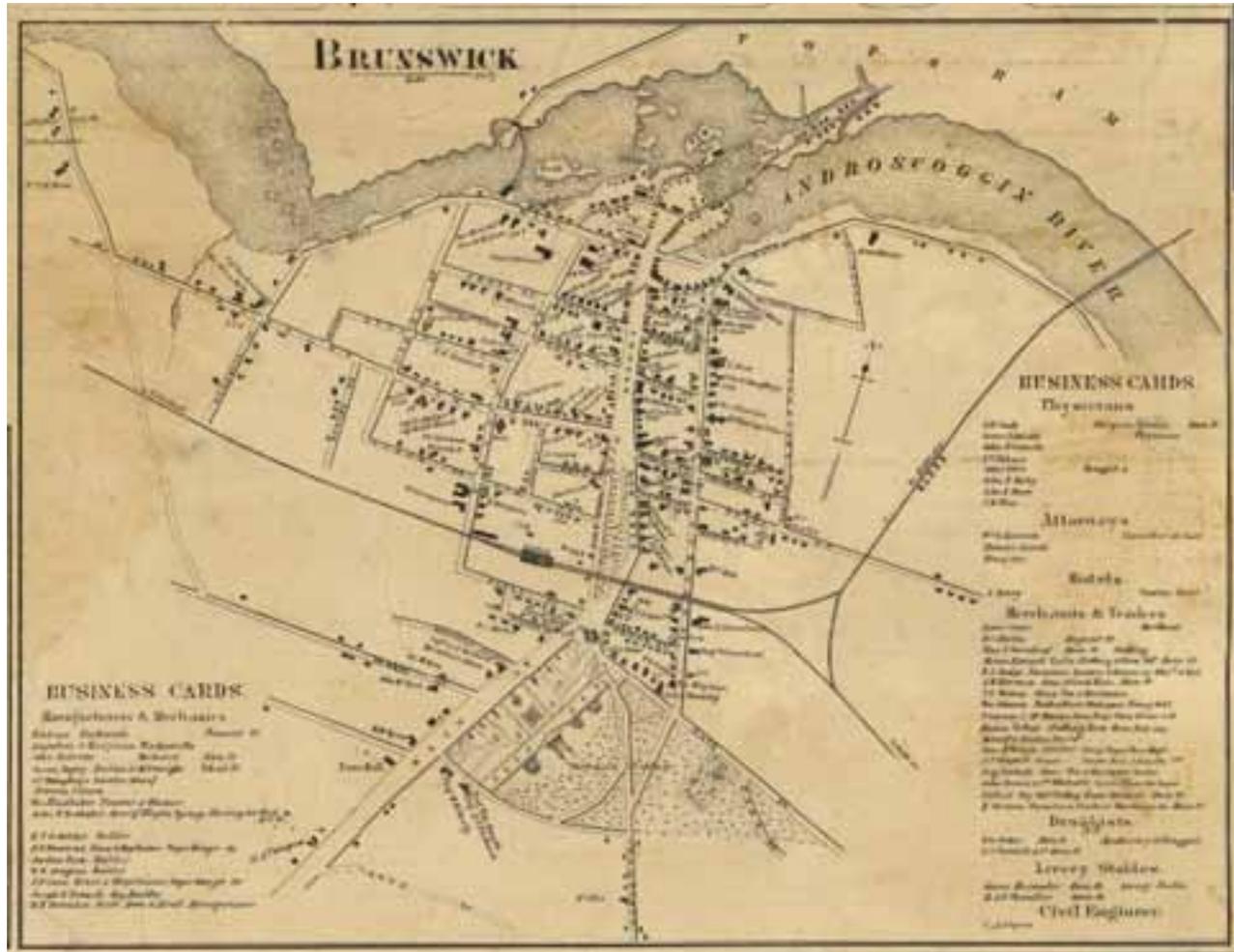
Maps show that by the early twentieth century Brunswick was a hub for public transportation, including trains, trolleys, and steamships. Resorts such as Merymeeting Park were important attractions for visitors from away.

Another claim to fame for Brunswick in the twentieth century was aviation. In 1921, a pair of Army pilots landed a biplane on a rough golf course in Brunswick. Soon after, the town turned a farm on the River Road into Maine's first municipal landing field. Then, in 1924, three biplanes landed in the waters of Maquoit Bay at Mere Point by accident. It was the first time the fliers had been in the U.S. since they started a record-setting, round-the-world flight weeks earlier.

In 1943, the U.S. Navy constructed an air station in Brunswick to train Canadian pilots and launch submarine patrols. It was deactivated in 1946 at the end of World War II, but re-commissioned in 1951. Brunswick Naval Air Station was disestablished in 2011 and turned into Brunswick Executive Airport and Brunswick Landing. A succession of U.S. government topographic maps from the past century documents the changes in airfields and the Naval Air Station in Brunswick.

So far, realignment seems to be the theme of the twenty first century. Interesting maps are being made of

Continued on Page 4: Mapping



J. Chase's map of Cumberland County, showing Brunswick in 1851.

Library of Congress.

Continued from Page 3: Mapping

Brunswick for street planning, environmental restoration, tide forecasting, and open space conservation.

Brunswick has thousands of interesting map stories. For half a millennium, it has been a focal point for exploration, exploitation and epic wars. It has been a hub for transportation, industry, academia and military activity. Maps provide a time machine transporting us to past eras and revealing political decisions, ecological impacts, and economic developments. Mapping Brunswick highlights a microcosm of Maine history through its fascinating arc of settlement, expansion, and change.

**Jym St. Pierre**, a native of Auburn, has worked for conservation agencies and nonprofit organizations in Maine for forty years. He is also an award-winning photographer and editor of the Maine Environmental News web site.

## Calendar.

Winter Wisdom Lectures. Free and open to the public. Curtis Library, Brunswick.

Wednesdays, 12:15 – 1:15 pm.

- Jan. 3 – **Nan White** and the *High Winds Flute Choir*.
- Jan. 10 – **Charles Dunbar**, *The United States and Saudi Arabia: What Has Changed and What Hasn't*.
- Jan. 15: REGISTRATION BEGINS FOR SPRING CLASSES
- Jan. 17 – **Kate Bracher**, *When the Sun Blacks Out: Solar Eclipses, Past, Present and Future (2024)*.
- Jan. 24 – **David Little**, *The Art of Acadia*.
- Jan. 31 – **Gary Lawless**, *Venice: Where Did the Stones Come From?*
- Feb. 7 – **Robert and Phyllis Ives**, *IONA: The Sacred Isle of Scotland*.
- Feb. 14 – **Longfellow Days**. --*Tricia Welsch, Loose Leaves*.
- Feb. 21 – Snow make-up Day
- Mar. 12: SPRING CLASSES BEGIN

## The Code Talkers

*Jan Wilk*

In the early decades of the 20th century most Native Americans Indians were living a traditional life on government-designated reservations, separated from the rest of the American population. Children were sent to the regional Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools to learn English and receive an “American” education. The government sought to remove the “burden” of their native culture and traditions, particularly their native language.

When the U.S. entered into the First World War in the spring of 1917, a continuing problem for the Allies was the ability of the Germans to break our codes that were based on either European languages or numerical configurations. A company commander happened to overhear two Choctaw Indians in his division speaking in their native Choctaw. The Choctaw Telephone Squad was born by having a few Choctaw speak their native language to send secure radio messages. The language was so foreign and undecipherable that the Germans thought the U.S. had invented a contraption to speak under water. While this concept was short-lived, it would shape the future of a key U.S. military code.

On December 8, 1941, the day after our Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor was nearly destroyed and when Europe was already embroiled in warfare, the U.S. declared war on Japan. Japan’s military was capturing and militarizing one Pacific island after another and, as in World War I, the American military codes were continuously broken, putting U. S. military actions and lives in jeopardy.

Philip Johnson, a civil engineer and the son of missionaries, grew up on the Navajo reservation. Johnson convinced Marine Corps officials that the Navajo language, which was unwritten, could become the framework for an unbreakable code to be used in the Pacific. Navajo was an extremely difficult language to learn unless you had heard it from infancy. It was estimated that only thirty non-Navajo individuals spoke the language at that time. Unlike other tribes, the Navajo had also resisted adopting English words to their language, so Navajo was considered a “pure” language.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs gave permission for the Marine Corp to recruit young men from the Navajo reservation for a top-secret experimental program. Twenty-nine young Navajo men, most from those Indian Affairs schools, were chosen for this experiment – The Original 29. “They were to construct an alphabet based

on the Navajo language, choose Navajo words to substitute for frequently used military terms, keep the terms short for rapid transmission and memorize all terms.”



Under tight security, the Original 29 developed a double encryption code by choosing a familiar Navajo word for each letter of the English alphabet. Then, more than seven hundred common Navajo words were selected to be used in battle transmissions that related to unfamiliar military terms. For example, the Navajo word for chicken hawk (gini) was used as the English word for dive-bomber.

In the meanwhile, Japan had captured the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaya, the Netherlands East India, Burma and Guadalcanal. To prevent further conquests, the U.S. made plans to take the beaches of Guadalcanal in the first battle that involved the Navajo Code.

The fairly reliable code machine the Army had been using coded, sent and decoded the messages in four hours. The new Navajo Code coded, received and decoded messages in 2 and ½ minutes! The Code Talkers were able to do this without writing anything down! Without a single mistake! The Code was thus used for the most strategic messages sent during a battle.

The Code Talkers became so essential to the Marines that they were often given round-the-clock bodyguards. Whether because of this protection or their own Indian prayers, only three Code Talkers lost their lives during battle in the Pacific and none were ever captured.

Continued on Page 6: Code Talkers

Continued from Page 5: Code Talkers

Eventually over four hundred Navajo men, plus a score of other Native American Indians from eighteen other tribes, served as Code Talkers during World War II. Code Talkers participated in every Allied offensive in the Pacific from Guadalcanal (February, 1943) to Iwo Jima and Okinawa (1945), and in smaller numbers in Europe and North Africa.

Iwo Jima involved some of the fiercest fighting in the War in the Pacific. It was thought that Japan-held Iwo Jima needed to be secured because it was directly in the flight path to Japan and forces needed a refueling base in their preparation for a conquest of Japan itself. The Navajo Code Talkers came ashore the first day of the landing and had six Code Talkers working 24 hours a day sending and receiving over eight hundred secure messages during the first two days of battle, all without error. A Navajo coded message sent the first news throughout the Pacific of the famous flag-raising on Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima. Code-talker proficiency helped “turn the tide” of battles time and time again.

The final Navajo Code message of the war was sent to U.S. scientists, not soldiers. It contained the official reports of the immediate aftermath of the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The end of the U.S. occupation of Japan on December 31, 1946, ended the Navajo’s “special duty” in World War II. The Navajo code was never broken!

The Navajo code had, from the beginning, been declared “top secret”, making it impossible for any Code Talkers to speak with other soldiers or write to their families of their involvement during the war. They were never allowed recognition or medals for their deeds. The existence of the Navajo Code and the Code Talkers would remain a military secret for more than twenty years.

It was not until 1969 that the U.S. government declassified the Navajo code; the Code Talkers no longer had to keep their silence, because computer technology and encryption had replaced the Navajo Code. Unfortunately, by this time many of the Code Talkers had died or had left their war memories behind.

In 2000, the senator from New Mexico introduced Senate Bill 2408 known as the Honoring the Navajo Code Talkers Act. It authorized Bill Clinton, then the U.S. president, to award a Congressional Gold Medal to each of the original twenty-nine code talkers and a Congressional Silver Medal to the other 400+ code talkers who followed in their footsteps. President George W. Bush finally awarded the medals to the remaining Code Talkers.

The last of the Code Talkers, Chester Nez, died on June 4, 2014. But as he so eloquently stated, “our story is not one of sorrow, but one of triumph.” Navajo Code Talkers had helped win the war.

**Jan Wilk** is a graduate of Wittenberg University with a degree in history and of the University of Maine. She taught at Mt. Ararat High School, and was named Brunswick Citizen of the Year in 1998. She has served on the boards of the Curtis Library, Pejepsco Historical Society, and Maine State Music Library.

## **Historical Nuggets from the Midcoast Past**

### **Midcoast “Pyrates” of 1717**

**Robert C. Williams**

“Speak like a Pirate Day” in September, when I was “upta camp”, plus a Portland exhibit on pirates, encouraged me to read Colin Woodard’s *The Republic of Pirates* (2007) and to examine the role of piracy in the settling of Topsham and Brunswick.

Piracy reached its peak around 1717, when the Maine coast was being resettled after decades of Abenaki Indian attacks and Anglo-French wars. Pirates were the scourges of shipping on the high seas from the Caribbean to Canada. They were as feared as Blackbeard and as loved as Robin Hood.

In April 1717, the pirate-captured British war- and slave-ship *Whydah* (the name of an African slave-trading region, pronounced wid-ah) sank in a nor’easter off Eastham on Cape Cod, but other pirate ships did not know about its fate for weeks. (The wreck of the *Whydah* was only discovered in 1984 and a Provincetown pirate museum now bears its name.) Built in 1715 as a slave ship and captained by the pirate Samuel “Black Sam” Bellamy, the *Whydah* allegedly captured some 53 vessels before it sank.

Paulsgrave Williams (no relation), the pirate captain of the *Marianne*, was headed up the East Coast for Damariscove Island off the Maine coast, seizing vessels as he went. Bewigged, fit and tanned, Williams told his Bahamian friends that Maine was ripe for the picking—thick with forests, depopulated by the Indians, and full of safe rock-bound islands and hidden coves for pirate vessels. He may well have known of the pirate Dixie Bull’s raid on Pemaquid in 1632, as portrayed below:

Continued on Page 7: Pirates

Continued from Page 6: Pirates

Williams went further. Maine, he told friends, could well be the northern terminus of a pirate republic whose violent, freebooting and democratic activities ran south to the Bahamas and blockaded South Carolina in the wake of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) that ended



decades of bloody Anglo-French-Indian wars (and initiated the founding of Brunswick and Topsham). The pirates themselves were unemployed veterans of these wars, escaped African slaves, and Jacobite rebels who wished to restore the Scottish and Catholic Stuarts to the throne of England, only recently united to Scotland in 1707. And the pirates

were a serious threat to the British and French navies, not to mention merchant shipping.

On April 29, the pirate ship *Ann Galley* dropped anchor off Monhegan Island, settled since 1614, but now abandoned in the wake of Abenaki attacks. The island seemed deserted.

Meanwhile, Paulsgrave Williams and the Marianne, coasting near the entrance to Long Island Sound, were still unaware of *Whydah's* fate and busy seizing ships. They now headed for Cape Elizabeth, Maine, arriving May 18 and hoping to meet up with the doomed *Whydah*. Williams seized the fishing sloop *Elizabeth* out of Salem en route. Dominicus Jordan, a settler near Cape Elizabeth, spotted the pirates, sensed trouble, grabbed his wife, son and servants and headed for the woods.

Williams and his crew spent the night at Cape Elizabeth, then sailed the next day thirty miles east to Damariscove Island off of what is now Boothbay Harbor. The island was a perfect hiding place for repairs to the Marianne and appeared unoccupied. Williams worked on his vessel and waited five days in vain for the *Whydah*, reportedly laden with gold and jewels, but now a rotting hulk on the sea bottom at Cape Cod.

The Marianne was only fifteen miles from Monhegan, but never met up with the second pirate ship, *Ann Galley*, which probably had headed south to the Bahamas and safety.

By the end of May 1717, *Whydah's* fate was front-page news along the New England coast. Looters and scavengers arrived in Cape Cod looking for treasure. Pirate

raids were all too frequent for authorities to tolerate any longer. Massachusetts Governor Samuel Shute closed Boston Harbor for a week and held captured crew members of *Whydah* in Boston Prison.

On September 5, King George I issued a proclamation or Act of Grace that any pirate who surrendered to a British governor within a calendar year would receive a full pardon for any acts of piracy committed before January 5, 1718. Pirates who refused to come in would be hunted down with no mercy. Six men in cages at Boston prison had been already sentenced in October to hang, and they did so under the watchful eye of the Reverend Cotton Mather on November 15.

Paulsgrave Williams was no fool. In February, 1718 he joined hundreds of his fellow pirates and surrendered to the British governor of the Bahamas. The Golden Age of Piracy was coming to a close. But when last seen, Williams was still up to his old pirate ways off the coast of Africa, leaving his family behind in Rhode Island.

No wonder the good residents of Brunswick, Maine, referred to their Ulster-Scot Indian-fighting neighbors across the river in Topsham as "pyrates." Perhaps some of them were.

"AAAAAARRRRRRGGGGG, Matey," as Paulsgrave Williams might well have said to his pirate crew.

## News from the Board of Directors

### James Wilkes—new board president

James Wilkes has been Vice President of Midcoast Senior College for the past two years and chair of the Policy Committee since 2014 in addition to serving on the Finance Committee. In his 38-year career in education Wilkes served as an Ohio city Superintendent of Schools, assistant superintendent, principal and teacher. After retiring from public education Wilkes worked in the private sector as a school facility planner for an Ohio architect and engineering firm. He concluded his career as Assistant Dean for Teacher Professional Development at Ashland University, Ohio.

### Tony Belmont—outgoing board president and immediate past president

Tony Belmont, a retired physician, graduated from Bowdoin College in 1960. After a career as a Navy Medical Officer and Corporate Medical Director, he and his wife, Linda, moved to Midcoast Maine in 2000. Tony served as a member and President of the local hospice, in various alumni activities at Bowdoin, and on the Board of Midcoast Senior College. During his Presi-

Continued on Page 8: Board

Continued from Page 7: Board

dency from 2015-2017, MSC has seen its relocation to the SNHU campus, hired two part-time employees, and grown by 20% each year.

**Ervin Snyder—new treasurer and member of the board**

Ervin Snyder is a retired attorney who has lived in Brunswick for more than forty years. He has served in numerous town positions, including the Brunswick School Board, Town Council and various building committees, including the Curtis Library committee. In addition, Ervin was the first president of the Merrymeeting Council of Governments, and has volunteered his services to a number of local non-profit organizations.

**Our new board secretary is Lynn Lockwood.**

**Our new vice president is Doug Bates.**

**We also thank the following retiring board members:**

**Bill Mason**—Board member. Bill, a former admissions director at Williams, Bowdoin and Holy Cross colleges, has served on the board since 2014. He has played an active role on the Development, Public Relations, Curriculum and Long-term Planning committees.

**Ian MacKinnon**—Secretary. Ian has been a most diligent, conscientious and precise recorder of our words and deeds for the past several years.

**Sandra Neiman**—Treasurer. Sandra joined the MSC board as treasurer in 2009. She helped the college assume total responsibility for our fiscal affairs as an independent nonprofit, and to move from our Bath home to Brunswick. Sandra enjoyed her eight years on the board, especially the wonderful people with whom she worked. She looks forward to taking more classes at MSC.



*...because learning never ends.*

**Midcoast Senior College**  
10 Tibbets Drive, Suite 210  
Brunswick, Maine 04011  
[midcoastseniorcollege.org](http://midcoastseniorcollege.org)  
(207) 725-4900

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Brunswick, Maine 04011  
Permit No. 34