

Wessaweskeag Historical Society
June 8, 2023
Corner of Dublin Rd. and Elm St .in South Thomaston
Pot Luck supper at 6p- program at 7p

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“Getting the Shop Ready: Elizabeth Horn Kaufman and the Old Spalding House, 1949-1994”

On Thursday, June 8th, the Wessaweskeag Historical Society will hold its monthly evening of good food and great speakers! The program will begin at 7pm.in the Society’s meeting room that is located behind the Village Schoolhouse Museum at the corner of Rt. 73 and Dublin Road and will follow our Potluck supper which begins at 6pm. The public is cordially invited to join us for both the program and for the potluck.

In the years immediately following World War II, many arts and crafts organizations sprang up in the State of Maine - such as in 1948, the official opening of the William A. Farnsworth Library and Art Museum; in1950, the founding of Haystack Mountain School of Crafts; and in 1952, the founding of the Maine Coast Artists’ Gallery in Rockport (Now CMCA in Rockland). With a few noteworthy exceptions, the founders and organizers were people who had recently moved here “from away” .

During these years, another local institution was founded - the Old Spaulding House: a seasonal shop and gallery run from 1949 through 1994 on Elm Street in the Keag Village by Elizabeth Kaufman (with the frequent help of her husband Worth Kaufman) Natives of Ohio, the couple, with daughter Pleasance, aged 10, had moved to South



Thomaston in 1948. Elizabeth, herself a handweaver, envisioned a seasonal shop that would feature and promote fine examples of a range of contemporary Maine arts and crafts. She included such names as: Carroll Thayer Berry, William and Estell Shevis, and Laura Patterson's Rowantree Pottery. She fine-tuned this vision for the next 45 years and, as her ability to travel waned, added good books about Maine—ordered by mail—in the final decades.

After Elizabeth's death at 92 in 1998, Pleasance gave most of the business records and correspondence to the University of Maine-Orono Library's Special Collections. Their interest was twofold: 1) The Old Spalding House was a business established and run by a woman; and 2) it played a role in the State's vibrant post-WWII arts and crafts scene.

The speaker, Elizabeth and Worth's daughter Pleasance, grew up with the shop, met many of the craftspeople, and knew their stories. She is a graduate of Rockland High School (1956), Oberlin College (1960) and the University of Toronto (1979) and a retired landscape design historian.

The Wessaweskeag Historical Society was founded over three decades ago and is a nonprofit, charitable organization anchored in South Thomaston. It maintains an archives and museum contiguous to the town's public library, hosts monthly potluck suppers and heritage programming available to the public. The Society also hosts the annual Heritage Day, sponsors local historic preservation and cooperates with kindred community organizations. Higher education for local youth is supported through the Society's scholarship program.