

## Belfast Museum gussying up for big season

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George Squibb, archivist at the Belfast Museum, checks out the two man jail cell that used to be in the basement of City Hall. The museum will exhibit the cell at its new seasonal annex located next to the historic museum building on the corner of Church and Market streets. The Belfast Museum opens for the season on Saturday, June 23. (Bangor Daily News/Walter Griffin) [Buy this photo](#)

BELFAST - Officials at the Belfast Museum are polishing up the exhibits in preparation for this season's opening day Saturday, June 23.

The popular summer stop has a number of new exhibits on display, including one on the legendary Belfast-built sailing ship Charlotte W. White, which was lost at sea in 1880.

Another attraction is its new annex which features a two-man jail cell that was once the "drunk tank" in the

cellar of City Hall, and an antique horse-drawn hearse.

The museum is housed in a red brick Federal-style building at the corner of Church and Market streets that dates to 1835. The property was built by James Langworthy, who operated a store on the ground floor and lived on the upper floors. The Belfast Historical Society obtained the building in 1975 and continues to make improvements on the property.

Historical society president Megan Pinette said the group's latest project — the seasonal annex building next door — will be ready for a number of exhibits this year. Once a run-down barn tumbling in on itself, the annex has been given a new concrete foundation and new cedar shingle siding. Painters were putting the final coats on the front door Friday as Pinette and museum archivist George Squibb stopped by to check on their progress.

"We're looking forward to another good season," Pinette said of next Saturday's opening. "We have some new exhibits to go with our new annex. That will be a big new draw this year."

The Charlotte W. White was built in 1858 at the White & Conner Shipyard at the foot of Allyn Street. Under the command of Capt. William P. Dyer, it was lost at sea with all hands somewhere between Nova Scotia and Liverpool, England. Many of Belfast's leading residents had invested in the ship and lost their fortunes when it went down.

A painting of the ship by noted Belfast artist Percy Sanborn is part of the exhibit. The real prize, however, is the restored model of the Charlotte W. White that was returned to Belfast from Steele Memorial Library at Elmira, N.Y.

Squibb said he first learned of the model's existence while looking through some of the museum's papers last year. During his perusal Squibb came across a 1971 letter to the historical society from an Elmira resident inquiring about John White, a former owner of White & Conner Shipyard. It seems that after selling the shipyard, White had moved to New York to be closer to his daughter Emma and her husband, Capt. Frederick Barker. When he left Belfast, White took with him a model of the Charlotte W. White.

The model was donated to the Steele library upon the deaths of the Barkers, and there it resided until the historical society inquired whether the library would be willing to sell or lend it to the museum. The library's trustees voted unanimously to give the model to the museum, and it was brought to Belfast last August. The model is of exceptional quality and has been lovingly restored by BlueJacket Shipcrafters of Searsport. The model now has a prominent place in a display case in one of the museum's main rooms.

"We knew a lot about the White family," Squibb recalled Friday. "We knew nothing about the model. We kept the library apprised of the restoration and when they saw the pictures they basically said, 'We sent it to the right place; you've done to it what we never would have done.'"

Pinette said this year's exhibits also will feature Belfast's historic place in baseball history as the terms "on deck" and "in the hole" were first uttered during an Aug. 7, 1872, game in the city between the Belfast Pastimes and the Boston Red Stockings. The original scorecard shows the Red Stockings winning 35-1 but it was the lore, not the score, that lives on to this day.

Another exhibit features "Notable Women of Belfast." The exhibit features photographs, histories and the fashions of many of the city's historical women. Essie P. Carle was the first woman to register to vote in 1920. All told, 352 city women registered that year, including the oldest, Sarah E. Stewart, at 94. It also notes that Emma Pitcher was the first woman to introduce music instruction to the public schools of Maine.

One of the quirkiest items in the museum is a small table that was built from wood taken from the Maine State Prison gallows when it was dismantled at the Thomaston prison. There also is an 1812 letter to the selectmen from retired Revolutionary War Gen. George Ulmer, the county sheriff at the time. Ulmer advised the town fathers that the justices of the Supreme Judicial Court would be passing through on their way to Castine and that they better make sure the roads were in good shape if they wanted to avoid the ire of the judges.

Besides being staffed by a team of volunteers, the Belfast Museum also hosts an intern program. This year's interns will be students from Belfast Area High School, who will work on cataloging items, greet visitors and serve as docents. They will be funded by the Belfast Historical Society.

The Belfast Museum is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday from June 23 to Labor Day and at the same hours Fridays and Saturdays after Labor Day to Columbus Day.

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