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Record Book Returned to North Yarmouth

On April 15, 2009, a Town of North Yarmouth record book finally returned home.

The book is a North Yarmouth Town Treasurer's record book, kept between 1735 and 1799. The calfskin-bound volume, its pages tanned with time, was handed over to Debbie Allen Grover, North Yarmouth Town Clerk, by Margaret Soule, Board Chair of the Yarmouth Historical Society. The record book will fill in a gap in North Yarmouth's records that has existed for many years.

The Town Treasurer's book had long been held in the collections of the Yarmouth Historical Society. In the casual way that official records were often handled during the 19th and early 20th century, the book may have been taken home by a town official at some point. It remained in private hands until some public-minded citizen decided, in the early 1960s, that it should be added to the holdings of the newly formed Yarmouth Historical Society.

When Yarmouth seceded from North Yarmouth in 1849, the legal separation agreement dictated that the Town of North Yarmouth was to retain possession of all "Ancient" North Yarmouth town records, which date back to 1680. (Ancient North Yarmouth encompassed the present-day communities of Cumberland, Chebeague Island, Freeport, Harpswell, North Yarmouth, Pownal, Yarmouth, the Mere Point area of Brunswick, the Small Point area of Georgetown, and nearby islands.)

Several years ago, the treasurer's record book was identified by the Yarmouth Historical Society as belonging to the official records of the Town of North Yarmouth. More recently, the organization's Collections Committee voted to de-accession it and return it to North Yarmouth. "It seemed only right that this volume be placed with North Yarmouth, since that town holds all the other records of its type concerning ancient North Yarmouth," Margaret Soule, YHS Board Chair, emphasized.

"This is very important for the town of North Yarmouth," said Katie Murphy, President of the North Yarmouth Historical Society. "We're gratified that the Yarmouth Historical Society looked at their collections and sent this important document home. We hope this might serve as a model for other historical organizations and municipalities to work collaboratively. So many Maine town records have been lost, damaged or gone astray, and the return of such precious early records is always very good news."

The transition from colonial times to the early years of the republic is clearly apparent in this volume. In the beginning of the record book "old" North Yarmouth's taxes were paid in pounds, shillings and pence. In the year 1797, dollar and cent signs are prominently inscribed. This changeover announces the new currency of an independent nation.

Records in the book are inscribed by the hand of several different town treasurers:
Gilbert Winslow, 1736-1767
William Cutter 1769-1776
John Gray 1777-1796
Jacob Mitchell 1797-1819

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