



Maine's First Ship

Newsletter



Spring 2017

Special points of interest:

- Lecture series recap
- Become a docent!
- Apprenticeship visit
- President's Message
- Annual Gala dinner news
- Full Moon potluck July 9 for friends/supporters
- Michael Monsoor volunteers and promotion
- Tools and trees for building a pinnace

Newsletter produced
courtesy of the
Publicity
Committee:
Roger Barry, Lori Benson,
Allison Hepler



Inaugural MFS lecture series attracts public interest in colonial history

Audience members who attended one or more of MFS's first Lecture Series this spring on 17th century colonial and maritime history learned about maritime navigation, shipbuilding construction, the role of piracy in colonial exploration, and interactions between European colonists and natives living here in Maine.

surge in piracy that occurred during this period, the geopolitical forces that strengthened it, and its impact on the history of America. Nelson is an author, former tall ship sailor, and rigger for Maine's First Ship's *Virginia*.

Ethnohistorian Harald E. L. Prins, a Dutch anthropologist, explained the interac-



built *Virginia* in 1607. His presentation included several tools that most likely would have been used, including several that are now part of the Visitor Center exhibit.



Jeffrey Miller demonstrated navigational instruments and their uses in the 17th century. He brought several reproductions of navigational tools. Miller, a blacksmith and historian, runs Flintlock Forge in Waldoboro, Maine.

James Nelson spoke about the 17th century context of piracy. His presentation focused on the

tions between colonists and the native peoples living in Maine at the time of European colonization.



Last in the series was a presentation from *Virginia's* shipwright Rob Stevens, who explained how colonists at Fort St. George may have



President's Notes



For Maine's First Ship volunteers, boatbuilding, like any other skill, is a learning process often done by trial and error. Over the past few years working on *Virginia*, I have

made my share of errors, but to match my most recent endeavor to install a center garboard plank on the port side. Our plank-fashioning crew had made up the center garboard plank after carefully cutting the plank to the spiled dimensions, and it had been planned to fit the rabbit groove on the keel. Finding the width off on both ends, I moved the one forward bow line 13 inches forward toward the bow, marking a new line. My mistake was that I didn't cross off the old line. When it came time to cut the plank's bow end, I cut on the wrong line, rendering the plank 13 inches

too short and not useable for the center garboard plank, much to my chagrin. Another plank has since been cut and I have correctly cut the length to fit. Learning by doing can be costly, but if you don't make the effort to try your hand at something new, you aren't going to gain in boatbuilding or in life.

— Orman Hines

*Photo credits in this issue:
Lori Benson, Jeremy Blaiklock,
Dan Burchstead, Paul Cunningham,
Allison Hepler, Gail Smith*

Capital Campaign moves ahead

Thanks to generous donors the MFS Development Committee moves ahead this year in an effort to raise \$90,000 this year from businesses and individuals. Most of this goes into purchasing materials for *Virginia*. Other costs include insurance, Freight Shed maintenance, and utilities. Aside for a 10 hours/week office manager, MFS is a purely volunteer organization.

As we conduct this campaign of asking for pledges and donations, we acknowledge and thank MFS Board members, all of whom have pledged and/or donated \$36,000 as a group over the next three years as a challenge for supporters to match.

Education Committee focuses on long-term planning, suspends 2017 Summer student program

MFS is suspending the summer education program this year to focus on a long-term educational program. The Committee is concentrating its energy on updating our future summer plans. We'll be back next summer!

Visitor Center opens fulltime July 4th weekend

MFS Visitor Center is already open for spring visitors. Between now and July 1, the Visitor Center is open Friday 11-3, Saturday 10-3, and Sunday from 11-3. Beginning the weekend of July 4, visitors can stop by Tuesday-Saturday 10-3 and Sunday 11-3. Admission is free. Come see *Virginia's* progress. Contact Lori Benson if interested in becoming a docent, mfs1@myfairpoint.net



New additions to the Boat Shed



Left: A new, 17th-century boom box for the shop, a temporary addition to keep the builders focused, thanks to Julia Lane of Castlebay.

Right and above: A new viewing platform for visitors to *Virginia*, thanks to the builders. As planking nears an end, it's harder to see the boat



from below.



Annual Gala dinner winners and awardees



MFS's Development Committee presented its first John Bradford Jane Stevens Distinguished Service award at the Annual Dinner in May to MFS President Orman Hines. Bradford and Stevens were two of the earliest supporters of MFS and the building of *Virginia*. Bradford, who died earlier this year, did most of the research on the ship, and his research has been crucial in the current recreation of the original 1607 pinnace. The Development



Committee wanted to honor Hines for his efforts on behalf of MFS. (Photo L-R: Allison Hepler, Sharon Drake, Hines).

Also at the Annual Dinner, the winning raffle ticket was drawn for the skiff built by MFS students from last summer's educational program. The winner, seen above with his prize, was Dan Burchstead, MFS Treasurer.

80 members and supporters attended the dinner at J.R. Maxwell's in Bath, and over 160 raffle tickets were sold.

Thank yous and congratulations

Henry Briggs, of Arrow-sic, who volunteered his Community Service hours from North Yarmouth Academy power washing clapboards for the Bath Freight Shed's use on the south side of the building and painting in the Freight Shed kitchen. Henry attends Bates College this fall.



Dave King, of Woolwich, and his **Midcoast Mooring and Diving Services LLC**, who has been tending to *Jane Stevens'* mooring in the Kennebec for the past couple of years. Phone: 207 751-7047.



City of Bath, which recently donated another load of ash for block making for *Virginia*.



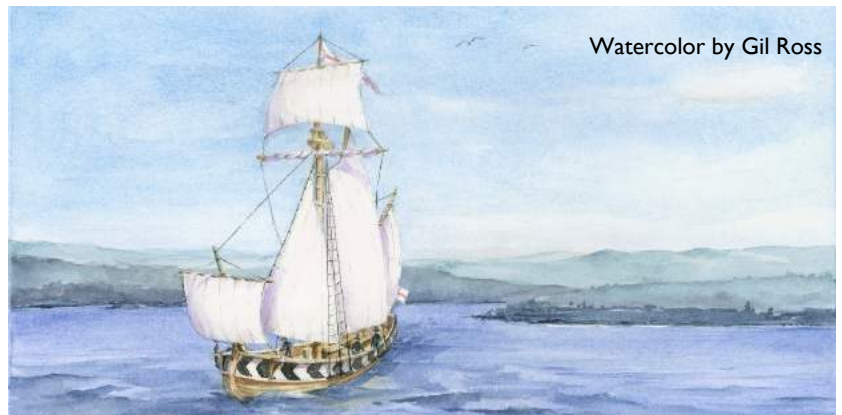
Arielle Leeman, of Bath, who is graduating from Morse High School this year, first in her class and Valedictorian. Arielle has been on MFS Board of Directors for the past year, helping us connect with students interested in maritime history and shipbuilding. In addition to her service to MFS, Arielle was a finalist in the state Poetry Out Loud program, a competitive tennis player and swimmer, musician and singer. She also finds time to work at Wilson's Drug Store in Bath. We wish her well as she heads off to Brandeis University.



MFS gets the word out to local, national history groups

Rob Stevens and Orman Hines recently got dressed up to speak at the national meeting of the Daughters of Colonial Wars in Washington DC in April. The organization donated \$2500 to Maine's First Ship.

Later this month, Stevens and Allison Hepler will give a presentation to the Kennebec Historical Society in Augusta on the "Popham Colony and the Pinnacle *Virginia*." Hepler recently presented at the Farmington Daughters of the American Revolution.



Maine's First Ship: Reconstructing the pinnacle *Virginia*

Michael Monsoor a key part of MFS community

Captain and crew of the “pre-commissioning unit” *USS Michael Monsoor*, which is undergoing construction at Bath Iron Works, continue their volunteer work on the reconstruction of *Virginia*. They have also been using the facilities for its meetings and, recently, a promotion.



Right: Capt. Scott Smith working on *Virginia*.



Above: Orman Hines conducted a tour for Naval personnel who attended the meeting they held at the freight shed. Mark Phillips, MFS volunteer and docent is wearing the MFS hat on right.



Left: Members of the *USS Michael Monsoor* crew and families were present to witness the promotion of (from left to right), Lieutenant Christopher Hevey, Lieutenant Camron Brandt, and Lieutenant Commander Scott Chase. Capt. Smith at right.



Student groups visit *Virginia*

Student groups of all ages have been visiting *Virginia*. Recently, two pairs of 10th grade student filmmakers from Camden Hills High School history class met with Rob Stevens and Allison Hepler for a project on the Pop-ham colony. They toured the ship and the Visitor

Center to get a feel for the history of the colony and of Maine's First Ship, and interviewed Stevens and Hepler. We look forward to seeing the results of their work on the MFS web



site, Stay tuned!
MFS also had

visitors from the school on Monhegan island, Lincoln Academy in Newcastle, and the Harriet Beecher Stowe Elementary School in Brunswick.

Virginia marks a milestone: garboards and



In March, the boatbuilders began installing the garboards, or lowermost planks on *Virginia*. As shipwright Rob Stevens said when the first one went on, "I'm pleased and proud of the crew because it's quite a bend. They'd done a beautiful job of fairing and dubbing the planks and it went on very smoothly."

As March slid into April, May and then June, plank-ing is progressing nicely with about 42 more white oak planks and clamps to hang.

After the sheer plank is hung, builders will install the beam clamp, and two more clamp strakes below that. Then



deck framing can commence!

The most recent planks being hung are called "joggle planks" and even "Texas joggle planks," which are planks at the *Virginia*'s bow. These planks are somewhat rare but are an acceptable way to deal with *Virginia*'s very bluff bow. As seen in the photos on the

next page, planks near the stem are a normal size near the stem but flair out to twice a normal plank's width further down. The joggle strake will eventually become two

planks. Also typical of a joggle plank (and also visible in the photos) is, because of the shallow angle where the plank hits the stem, knocking off the part of the plank that becomes a point. The plank above it will accommodate that cut-off section with a cut called a "nib."

Virginia will also have planks like this at the stern, which are called "stealer planks."

Last month, apprentices from the Rockland Apprenticeshop spent the day helping out at *Virginia*.

The Apprenticeshop has been a traditional wooden boatbuilding program since the 1970s, originally located at the Maine Maritime Museum and now on the Rockland waterfront. Two apprentices, Joao and Emily, the 'Shop instructor Kevin Carney, and Terry Moore came

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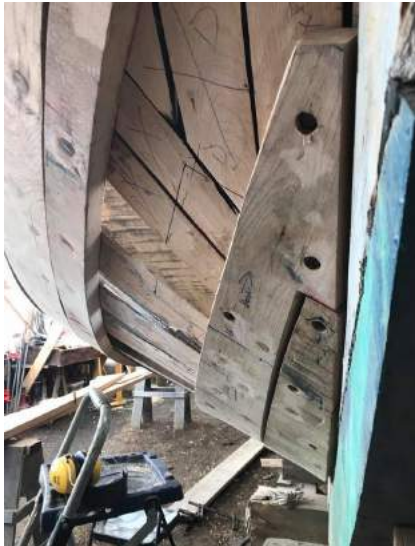


joggles, and sheer planks, oh my! (continued from previous page)

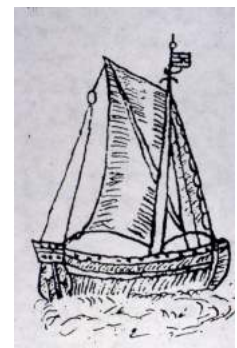
for the day of planking. MFS Education Chair and instructor George Sprague organized the visit. "It's great they are coming down," said Sprague, a graduate of the Apprenticeship. "They teach traditional wooden boatbuilding so this is a great hands-on project for the apprentices."

Stevens also enjoyed working with them. He is a 1980 graduate of the Apprenticeship and calls himself "fortunate enough to have been working on wooden boats of all sizes" for over 35 years.

According to a spokesperson, the Apprenticeship offers a 2 year apprenticeship program, as well as a 12 week intensive program. "The boatbuilding



schedule is rounded out with Seamanship classes so that all our builders also have knowledge about sailing the vessels they construct." In addition, the Apprenticeship hosts sailing classes all summer for community young people and adults.



MFS and Bath Freight Shed celebrate joining forces

After several months of planning and a number of meetings, MFS voted at its Annual Meeting in March to accept a proposal to join forces with a Bath Freight Shed Alliance. Our joint goals will ensure the future of the building as a vital community resource and provide a permanent home for *Virginia*.

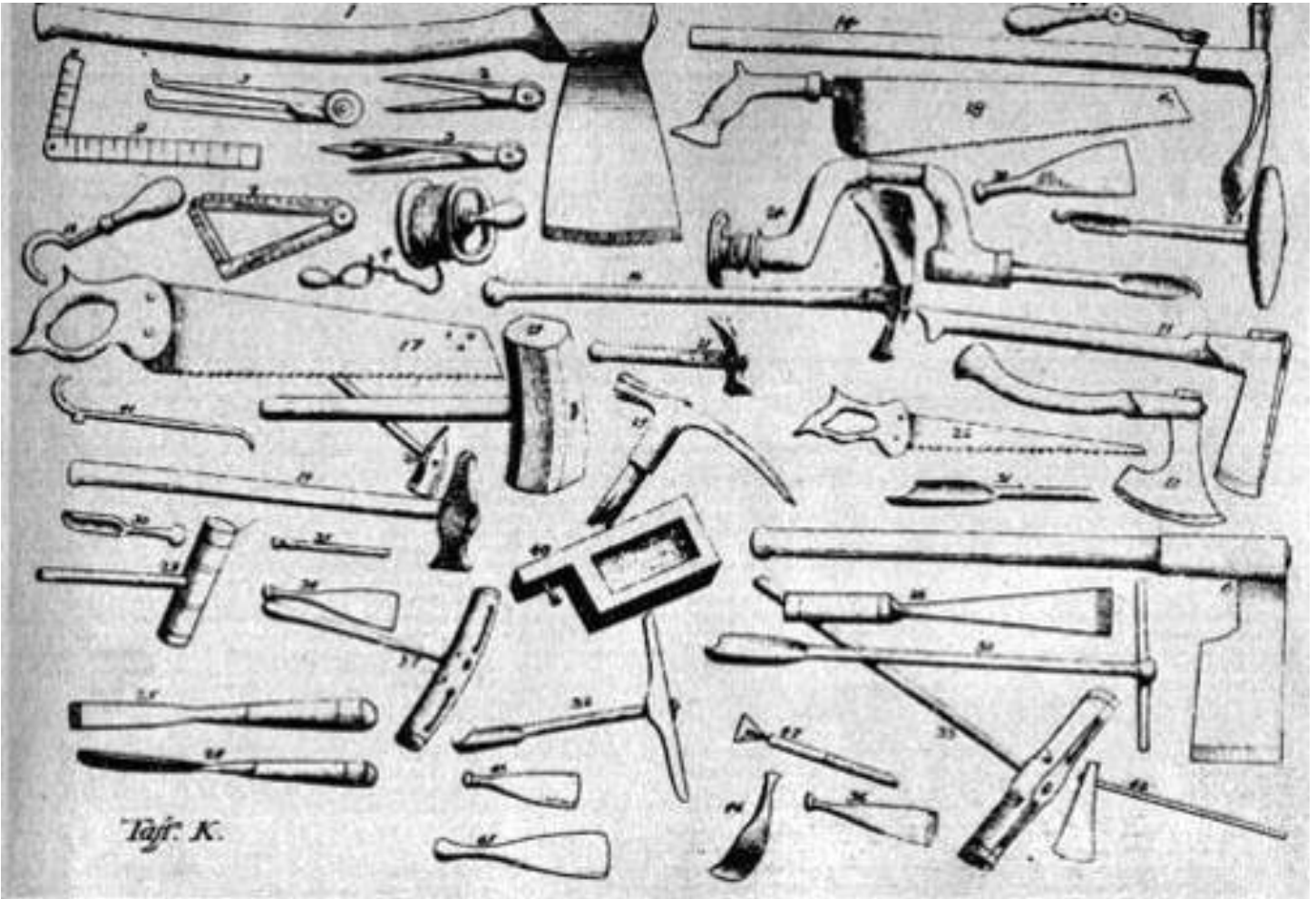
Come celebrate by joining us at a Community Supper and Silent Auction at the Freight Shed on July 9 from 5:30 to 7 pm. It's a potluck or \$15 donation.

There will be a screening of Charlie Hudson's recent film on community building at the Freight Shed.



Artwork by Anthony Muench

Tools for building a pinnace in the wilderness



by Rob Stevens

This is an illustration of European shipbuilding tools from Ralamb's *Skepsbyggrij* (1691).

Cutting tools: There are four axes, an English broadaxe, a Swedish cutting axe, a mortising axe, and a trimming hatchet. There are two adzes, among them an English adze and a Dutch or Swedish adze. There are also three handsaws, including a full handed English saw and a compass saw. Three English chisel.

Measuring tools: There are two rulers — the Ditch ruler can also be used as a bevel square — and a sparmaker's rule. There are three compasses, one of which holds chalk. Also among measuring

tools is a combination chalkline/plumb bob, and a race (timber scribe) knife.

Hammers: There is one mallet, two mauls, a claw hammer and a hammer with a pick.

Drilling tools: There's one Dutch brace, one gimlet, and three spoon augers. **Caulking:** three caulking mallets, eight caulking irons, and an oil box.

Pitch scraper.

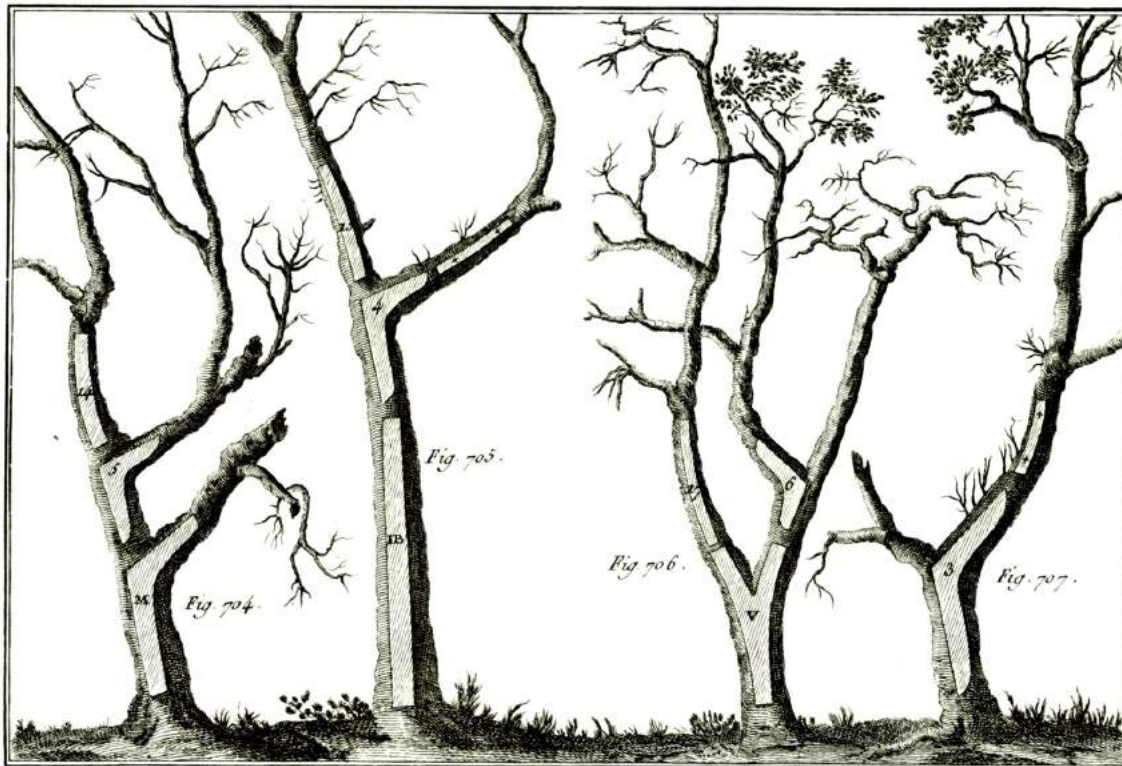
Interestingly, there are no hand planes or drawknives in this drawing.

(See how many of these you can find!)

The Vessels of the Popham Colony

It should come as no surprise to anyone who knows Rob that he can take a simple little idea, which was his in the first place, to write an article about the vessels involved in the Popham Colony, and to take it and go off on every tangent that can and cannot be imagined. It should also come as no surprise to anyone who knows Rob that he did not get it done in time for this issue. So stay tuned for upcoming issues!

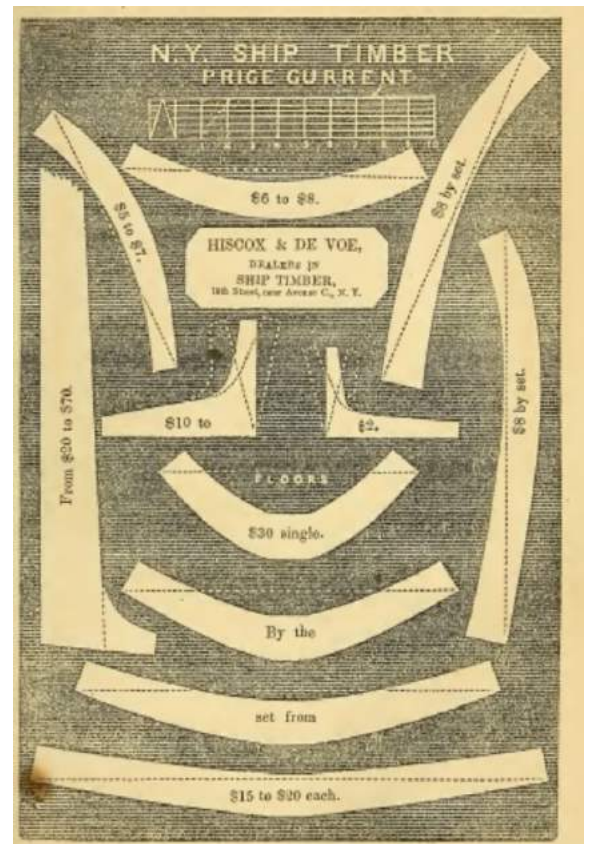
Trees for building a pinnacle in the wilderness



Marine

Shipwrights would search the woods for just the right tree they were looking for. The above drawing, from the Buckler's Hard Maritime Museum, shows a lot of shapes that would be needed for framing. Planking stock, surprisingly, was usually very straight. If the trunk of an oak tree had much of a curve to it, it was less than ideal for planking because the curve may have been caused by disease, a broken limb, or having grown on the side of a steep hill.

Oh, for the days when you could just go down to your local ship timber store and pick out what you needed, as is illustrated in this ad from an 1850s *US Nautical Magazine and Naval Journal* for a yard in New York City.





Maine's First Ship: Reconstructing the pinnacle *Virginia*

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 Ph: 207-443-4242
 Visit *Virginia* at
 27 Commercial Street
 (on the water side of the
 Bath Freight Shed)

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www.mfship.org



Special Thanks to Long-Time Business Partner, Big Barn Coffee

MFS Facebook page offers regular updates on *Virginia*

As many already know, Facebook is a good way to spread the word about MFS. As the power of social media is in sharing content, "Liking" our page seems like an easy way for members and supporters to support the organization, for those who have an account. MFS's Facebook administrator George Sprague has offered basic instructions on how to be able to see our Facebook content and also to share it with others if they are so inspired. See below.

"Liking" an organization's page feeds updates from that organization into your news feed. Type the name into the Facebook search bar.

Searching for Maine's First Ship results in two hits; select the one with our logo. Once the MFS page comes up you'll see our profile picture. Under this will be three options to click: Like, Follow, and Share. Click

"Like." The share button will allow you to share our page with your friends. Maybe one of them will like our page too.

From this point

scroll down and see what we've been



posting. Moving forward you'll see any posts from MFS in your news feed. If you "Like" a post you can click the "Like" button at

the bottom of the post. If you really liked it, you can click the "Share" button and this will broadcast it out to your group of friends even if they haven't liked MFS's page or – and this is the fun part – even if they have never heard of Maine's First Ship. You can even make a comment about the post on your page, such as, "This is the organization in Bath that I've had the privilege of being involved with. Check out our Facebook page and while you're there, "Like" it, too. Thanks for the support."