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POPHAM'S 400th – The History – then and now.

Between Thursday 23rd August and Sunday 26th August 2007, the little village of Popham Beach, Phippsburg will host many visitors attending the Popham 400th Celebration.. This four day event celebrates the landing and settlement of George Popham, 400 years ago, in 1607. He sailed from England with two ships and little more than 100 colonists, destined for the “New World”. They settled at the mouth of the Kennebec River and built Fort St. George, but they were not destined to stay. Maine's hostile winter, the loss of three key leaders and limited resources all contributed to the abandonment of their colony a year later.

Sometimes called “Maine’s Lost Colony” or the “Little colony that couldn’t”, the Popham settlement was significant in two ways. During their stay, the settlers built “The Virginia” the first ship to be built in the New World and sailed back to Europe, thus starting 400 years of shipbuilding in the area. And, the lessons learned by these first settlers were invaluable to subsequent English colonization.

Fort St. George has been the site of extensive archeological investigations. From 1997 Dr. Jeffrey Brain and his volunteers have worked at the site, using a map drawn by draughtsman John Hunt in 1607. This has enabled them to uncover the storehouse and Admiral’s house as well as many artifacts from the period. The history and artifacts will be available to see at the Maine Maritime Museum.

As the celebrations open, you will see “reflections” of that time 400 years ago. Penobscot Tribal Elder Reuben “Butch” Phillips will open with a ‘Smudging Ceremony’. This ceremony, accomplished with burnt herbs sage, cedar and sweetgrass, will cleanse away negative thoughts and energies, allowing a harmonious enjoyment of the four days to come.

The Society of 17th Century Re-enactors will be camped at Fort St. George throughout the four day period, where they will live in tents, with costumes, lifestyles and camp life very much as it was 400 years ago. When you visit their camp you will step back in to history and experience life as it was, on the exact spot where George Popham and his colonists, started life in the “New World”

On Sunday 26th August the Rt. Rev. Chilton R. Knudsen, the Episcopal Bishop of Maine, will lead the worship service, using an Anglican prayerbook from 1552, much like that used by the settlers 400 years ago. It was a time to give thanks for their safe passage and on August 19, 1607 they held their first service with a sermon and a formal taking possession of the land.

For more information on Popham 400th - directions, parking, event schedule and free shuttle buses, please go to <http://www.popham400.org>