

Dixmont's Boston Post Cane

In 1909, the Boston Post Cane legacy began. That year, the publisher of the Boston Post newspaper sent gold-headed, ebony canes to the Boards of Selectmen of 700 New England towns.

The canes were made by J.F. Fradley and Co., a New York manufacturer, from ebony shipped in seven-foot lengths from the Congo in Africa. They were cut to cane length, seasoned for six months, turned on lathes to the right thickness, and finally coated and polished. They had two-inch long, 14-carat gold heads, were decorated by hand, and finished with ferruled tips. The cane heads were engraved. Dixmont was the recipient of one such cane. The canes were to be presented to the oldest living male in each of these towns—compliments of the Boston Post—until finally, in 1930, women were also eligible to receive a cane. While the cane legacy was started as a publicity stunt to increase the newspaper's circulation, it has become an important way to honor the lives and contributions of the oldest members of communities.

While the canes themselves belong to the towns, since they were presented to community members, over the years many of the selected towns lost track of their canes. Dixmont is lucky enough to still have possession of the original cane we received in 1909. This historical treasure is part of an exhibit in the Mount Harris room of the town office created by the Dixmont Historical Society. The cane resides in a wall case, made by Fred Bryant, surrounded by photos of many of our cane recipients, and includes a plaque engraved with the names of cane holders. Dixmont's cane is inscribed as follows:

Presented by the Boston Post to the oldest citizen of Dixmont, Maine

The Dixmont cane comes out whenever the current holder passes on and it is time for a new cane holder. The newest Boston Post Cane recipient has their photo taken with the original cane, the photo is added to the Boston Post Cane exhibit, their name is added to the engraved plaque, and then they are presented with a ¼ size replica cane, which they may keep.

In March of 2022 at Dixmont's annual town meeting, Marion Dunivan was awarded our Boston Post Cane. Marion Morse, a Belfast native, moved to Dixmont when she married Oral Dunivan. Everyone knows Marion. A town icon, active in the community for over sixty years, Marion is known for so many accomplishments and contributions to our town that it would be impossible to list them all. Here is just a smattering from her long life.

Marrying Oral in 1952, Marion quickly became an important community member. She was active in and held many offices in the Grange, the Ladies Fire Auxiliary, 4-H, the local Extension office, and she was one of nine women who founded the Dixmont Scholarship Association. She was active in the town's fire department (Oral was fire chief) as a truck driver and safety person, and she was even known to wield a hose when needed. She was active in the Dixmont Gold Cest Riders Snowmobile Club, was voted into the Pine Tree Camp Hall of Fame for her outstanding fund-raising activities, and in 1983 was selected as Homemaker of the Year by the Penobscot County Grange for putting up over 100 quarts of vegetables, pickles, and jams. She was active in and held office in the Maine Trappers Association. She was part owner of the Dixmont Bakery, and she made homemade doughnuts for Piper Mountain Christmas Tree Farm for 21 seasons. For many years, every fall she baked her famous apple pies for the local orchard, Mainely Apples, and the locals knew to stop by early if they were to score one of those apple pies. In the early 1970s, she and Oral began purchasing tickets to the Shrine Circus for the entire second grade class of the local elementary school—a tradition that continued for 36 years. She was Dixmont's health officer for 8 years, tax collector for 20 years, and worked as a ballot clerk and vote counter in elections for many years. Marion's many contributions to the town showcase her belief in civic duty.

Marion worked side-by-side with her husband on the farm, raised five children plus her sister, gardened, canned, and cooked, and was very active in town her whole life. She has always been there to support our

community and its members. Dixmont was honored to present Marion Dunivan with the Boston Post Cane.

Past and present Boston Post Cane holders of Dixmont include the following (birth/death dates are included):

May Porter 1834 - 1931
Stephen Mudgett 1843 - 1937
Everett Bean 1858 - 1945
Lewis Bussey 1863 - 1951
Fred Simpson 1879 - 1951
Ulyssis Simpson 1864 - 1953
Freemont Grant 1865 - 1958
Evelyn Prescott 1868 - 1959
Clifford Tenney 1875 - 1964
Lou Harris 1876 - 1971
Fannie Patten 1882 - 1973
Ivy Andrews 1883 - 1990
Merle Braley 1888 - 1990
Fanny Gilman 1894 - 1994
Raymond Gould 1899 - 1997
Julia Cummings 1901 - 2002
Harrison Batt 1909 - 2004
Eleanor Toothaker 1911 - 2006
Frank Fuller 1913 - 2010
Mitchell A. Sowa 1918 - 2014
Lois P. Boone 1918 - 2015
Marion Dunivan 1933

Next time you are in the town office, be sure to check out the exhibit in the Mount Harris Room. You will notice that there are several missing pictures. We are always on the lookout for any information and/or photos that belong in the empty frames. Please let us know if you can help fill in the blanks.