

Mussel Ridge News

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Owls Head, Maine*

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Recollections of a Summer Kid growing up on Ash Point in the 1950s & 1960s

By: Rodney B. Weeks

Veteran's Picture Project

Last year I began collecting photos of all our Owls Head veterans who served in the armed forces, whether in peace time or the time of war. To date, I have gathered together quite a few pictures, but I have realized I don't have any pictures of our women veterans. I know for a fact that two women, who were best friends with my grandmother (Emily Weeks), were in the British Royal Army Medical Corps before the US entered into WWII. So who were these women?

Bean & Stimson

Sounds like a law firm doesn't it? Actually it describes two women doctors [Dr. Achsa Bean and Dr. Barbara Stimson] who were lifelong friends and who retired and lived together on Lucia Beach Road from around 1963 through 1986. One of the many benefits of spending your summers with your grandparents is you get to meet and know all of their friends. Drs. Bean and Stimson were favorites of my grandmother because of all the adventures they both lived before retiring to Maine. Here is a very short version of their military exploits.

Achsa Bean was born and grew up in Detroit, ME under less than desirable conditions. Her family was poor and the thought of a girl wanting to go to college, let alone medical school, was very unusual. Achsa worked many jobs to pay her way through college and medical school. She was only one of three women graduating from her medical school in 1936. In 1938 she took a faculty job at Vassar College and that is where she met Dr. Stimson.

Barbara Stimson on the other hand was lucky enough to be born into a highly educated and financially secure family from Manhattan, NY. Barbara attended Vassar College and then got her medical degree from Columbia, specializing in orthopedic surgery.

In 1940 France fell and Britain stood alone against the Nazis. Britain issued an Emergency Medical Request to the United States for medical personnel to serve in the British Royal Army Medical Corp. In August 1941 Bean & Stimson answered that call and sailed for England. Barbara was commissioned as a Major and Achsa as a Lieutenant.



Major Dr. Barbara Stimson



Lieutenant Dr. Achsa Bean

When the United States entered the war over a year later, the US armed services did not allow female doctors to serve in the armed forces. Barbara Stimson contacted her cousin, Henry Stimson, who was the Secretary of War and successfully convinced him that the ban of woman doctors serving in the United States armed services should be



lifted. He agreed and in 1943 Major Achsa Bean came home and was one of the first women doctors to enter the US armed services. She was commissioned as a Lieutenant Commander in the US Navy and served in the Pacific Theater.

Barbara stayed in the British Army serving in North Africa and Italy caring for wounded British soldiers. Both women served honorably for the duration of the war.

After the war, they both returned to Poughkeepsie, NY, Achsa as a teacher at Vassar College and Barbara in private practice. Upon retirement in 1963 Achsa bought land on the shore off Lucia Beach Road. She built a modest two bedroom home and invited Barbara to come live with her. The Bean & Stimson home is still standing and is pretty much the same. It is now owned by Molly Foster.

*Lieutenant Commander
Achsa Bean*

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Sea and Shore – Owls Head

By Edward Rowe Snow
Patriot Ledger Columnist

At the entrance to the attractive seaport of Rockland, Maine, is a high, wave-swept promontory, visible to all who sail up or down Penobscot Bay. At the peak of the Cliff, partly surrounded by spruce trees, is a lighthouse. Anyone who sails in the vicinity recognizes the location at once as Owl's Head.



The headland has been the scene of many battles, shipwrecks, and other dramatic episodes. When the Indians ruled the coast. They called it Medadacut. Many claim that Owl's Head is the English translation.

The owl's head which gives the promontory its name is easily identified as the rocky cliff by the two cave-like hollows which form the eyes and a ridge which makes the bridge of the owl's nose. Rocks on either side of the bridge form two eyeballs.

One of the first white men who landed at Owl's Head was the Indian fighter Col. Benjamin Church who at the time of his pursuit of Indians in 1696, anchored off Monhegan to fool the Indian warriors. Then, in the dead of the night, Church ordered his entire party into whaleboats and they rowed to Owl's Head, arriving at dawn, but the Indians had already fled.

In 1745, young Thomas Sanders, on board a vessel captained by his father, was decoyed ashore by an Indian at Owl's Head. Sanders was surrounded by several Indians and captured. His father sent a ransom of 50 pounds, but young Sanders insisted on getting safe conduct back to the coast before paying the money. While walking through the woods, he borrowed his guard's gun to shoot ducks, fled into the underbrush and escaped.

Burying the ransom in the woods, he finally reached the coast where he was soon aboard a Gloucester vessel headed back home. Fifteen years later he was sailing near Owl's Head and was becalmed. Remembering the cache of money, Sanders went ashore and retrieved it from its hiding place.

On June 7, 1757, thirty war canoes landed at Owl's Head and in a battle with white men, two Penobscot Indians were killed and promptly scalped by Capt. Joseph Cox, leader of the American forces.

After the Revolution, Thomaston and the entire surrounding vicinity was rapidly building up a substantial shipping business. Sail after sail passed the attractive Maine promontory, but many of them were wrecked in fog and storm.

Agitation started by the erection of a lighthouse, and in 1823 the steamer Maine made regular stops at Owl's Head, plans were finalized to build a light high on the nearby headland.

In September, 1825, keeper Isaac Stearns illuminated Owl's Head Light for the first time.

Thanks to Jack Willis for sending us this article



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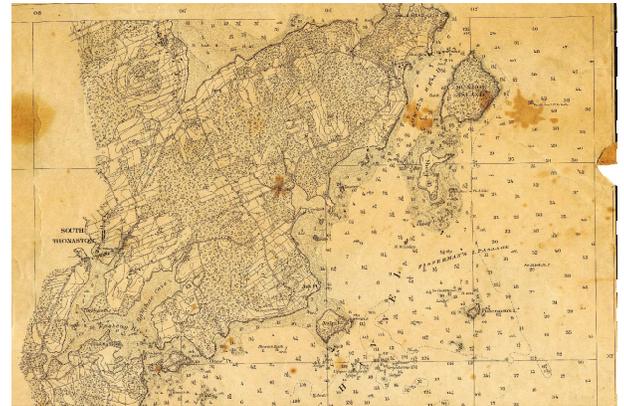
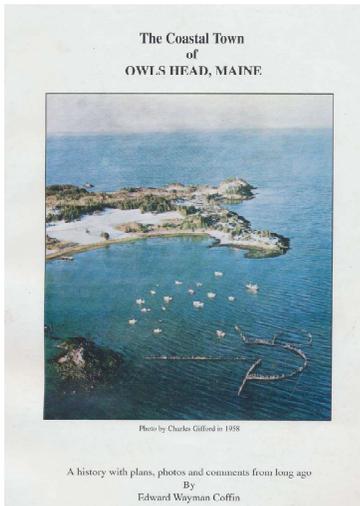
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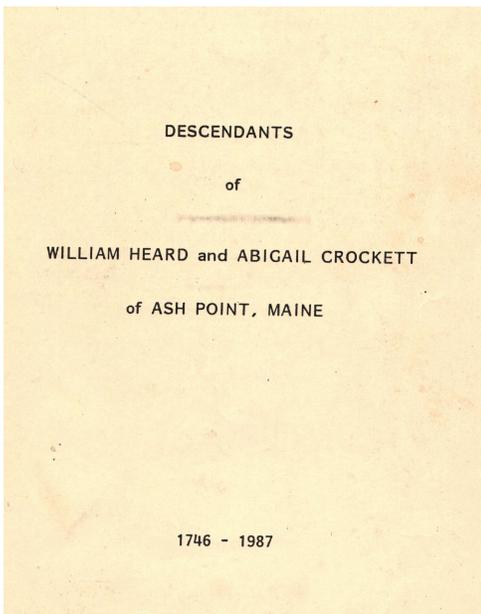
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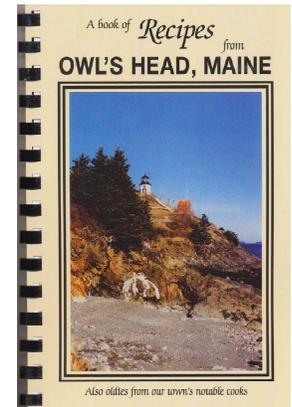


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Owls Head Cemetery Committee News!

As mentioned in the last newsletter, the Owls Head Cemetery Committee is working on an updated list of all burials in town which will be published in 2023. During the Holiday Beach Cemetery conservation project last September two of our crew dowsed for unknown burials in areas without headstones. Sure enough there were dozens in just that one cemetery! We believe all of our older cemeteries are full even though there are many seemingly empty areas without headstones. And now, thanks to recently discovered notes made by Elisabeth Walker in the 1970's from old Burpee burial records we know the names of MANY of those folks buried here without headstones or (visible/legible) markers. So far 76 more burials have been added to our records and to Find A Grave! The research continues.

One other project the Cemetery Committee is working on is to have signs in each town cemetery - currently only Ash Point and Ingraham Cemeteries have them.

Fundraising Progress Report for the Mussel Ridge Historical Society's Learning Center



Our Capital Campaign has raised over \$85,000! We are presently reaching out to get some basic estimates as building costs have increased in the past couple years. Stay tuned for upcoming fundraising events!

We find it very exciting to see down the road we will have a place to store historical artifacts, documents, and photos! One of our goals is to be able to educate young and old of our rich history. A place to find out more about our ancestors. It is an ongoing project to record history. If you would like to be interviewed and share your past about living in Owls Head, please let us know. Email us at history@musselridge.org or call 593-2667. We would very much love to hear your story.

Volunteers are always needed to organize our collections, scan photos, setup ideas for future exhibits, or whatever your gift is we welcome you.

If you have photos you would like to share, we will come to your home and scan on site. Everyone has a story to tell, and we want to pass that on for future generations!



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More than Just Books

Owls Head Village Library

by Michelle Miller

If you are reading this article, then perhaps I am preaching to the choir. You obviously enjoy reading, and you're interested in history. What follows briefly traces the history of the Owls Head Village Library, an establishment almost as old as the Town of Owls Head itself.



Our library was conceived when Mrs. Joseph G. Maddocks (nee Clara Ewing) convened a meeting in her home to establish a library association on October 10, 1927. A widow of less than a year, Clara Maddocks had been married to a Civil War veteran who helped repel Confederate soldiers at the battle of Little Round Top during the Battle of Gettysburg before he became the Owls Head Lighthouse keeper (<http://www.newenglandlighthouses.net/owls-head-light-history.html>). The couple's civic mindedness did not end with Mr. Maddocks' death, for Clara Maddocks was

determined to bring a library to life in the Town of Owls Head. Earlier in 1927, the town had voted on Article 39, which reads, "To see if the town will give to the Owls Head Library Association the old school building at Owls Head to be used as a library and community building at a location to be selected" (<https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5982&context=towndocs>). However, Article 39 must not have sailed through, because Mrs. Maddocks was still endeavoring to establish a library association later that same year.

Under Clara Maddocks' aegis, the town banded together to make the library a reality. The property on which the current library sits was purchased for fifty dollars (\$50.00) from the pastor of the Owls Head Baptist Church, Henry E. White. Vinal Perry served as the chairman of the building committee, with Mr. White as the "boss carpenter" (<https://www.owlshead.maine.gov/community/history/>). Construction was performed by community volunteers and financed by sales, suppers, and generous donations. The church's eventual next-door neighbor opened for business on February 4, 1928, when the first books were put into circulation. Before construction of the library was completed, the Owls Head Post Office had helped with the distribution of books.

Between then and now, the library has been staffed by a series of dedicated librarians. The first was Mrs. Celia Leadbetter, daughter of Joseph and Clara Maddocks; Mrs. Leadbetter served for approximately 22 years. Miss Winifred Fitch followed, giving close to 18 years to the library. Mrs. Julie Hill stepped into the position briefly before Mrs. Mary Dyer took over for almost 30 years. The library honored Mrs. Dyer by dedicating the Children's Room to her, and that space recently underwent a wonderful renovation. Then, Mrs. Deena Carafelli assumed the responsibilities of head librarian for approximately 23 years. Our current librarian, Pat Stephen, is a wealth of information on the resources available at the library as well as the library's history and operations. She is dedicated to making the library a real resource for the town. Her position almost became irrelevant when the library was threatened with permanent closure in 2020 (<https://knox.villagesoup.com/2020/06/25/fate-of-owls-head-library-up-in-the-air-1862796/>).

Fortunately, the community rallied, and the Owls Head Village Library reopened. The lull in library life resembles that of the Owls Head Post Office, which has shut down periodically: from 12/08/1838 to 02/07/1840, from 07/20/

1841 to 07/05/1854, and from 08/18/1868 to 06/20/1884 (<http://www.vfthomas.com/Mainepostalhistory/KnoxCounty/SouthThomastonpostalhistoryhome.htm>). Currently home to about 3,500 volumes, including a wide array of bestsellers—The State of Maine publishes guidelines that encourage three works per resident, making 5,000 a goal for our local collection—the library affords the ease of a state-of-the-art, online card catalogue. But the library is more than just books: it also sponsors Garden Gatherings. Last summer, residents of Owls Head could attend presentations on the Battle for Fort George, a 1779 naval skirmish in Castine; the adventures of world travelers David Butwin and Linda Nesbit Cortright; and the sources of inspiration for a good story by acclaimed author Tess Gerritson. Moreover, the library has a book club that meets on the second Thursday of every month at the Gilford Butler Center. As the library’s website states, “It is not a public library by the definition of the state of Maine but rather a library for the benefit of the public.”

Owls Head residents really do benefit from this valuable local resource. To kickstart National Library Week and celebrate National Poetry Month, stop by the open house scheduled for April 22, between 11:00 and 2:00. Meet your librarians, Pat Stephen and Pat Martin. They’re planning games, with prizes for both adults and kids. This year’s American Library Association theme is “There’s More to the Story,” and you’ll see for yourself that there is indeed much more. Not just books. Not just a simple story.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Irving "Mike" McConchie, a long time member and supporter of the MRHS, celebrated his 100th birthday on February 7, 2023. Mike now lives in Ohio close by his daughter, Julie Forte.

Happy 99th on March 17th to Vera Mathieson!

PASSING: We are sad to report that our long time Secretary, Bonnie Dyer Post, passed away on January 29, 2023

ON THE MEND: Ann Rafferty and Caroline Michalski, Director and Director Emeritus, respectively of the MRHS, are both on the mend and hope to rejoin us soon.



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