

Mussel Ridge News

A Free Publication of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society
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FROM THE BOARD TO YOU: THANKS!

Non-profit organizations generally depend on the generosity of donors to take care of business, and The Mussel Ridge Historical Society (MRHS) is no different. We rely on the largesse of our community to work our mission and achieve our objectives, which involve

- Promoting interest in, and knowledge and appreciation of the history of Owls Head, the Mussel Ridge Islands and their inhabitants and visitors;
- Collecting, identifying, interpreting, preserving, exhibiting and making available for education, research and pleasure: historical documents, records, photographs, information and artifacts relating to the above;
- Producing published material pertaining to the history of the area; and
- Managing and preserving buildings owned or leased by the society.

(Forgive us if we “preach to the choir,” but the importance of what we strive to do in conjunction with our supporters bears repeating now and again.)

Now seems an apt time to take stock of all those people to whom we are grateful for their steady financial assistance. Their ranks include the following:

- All those businesses and individual entrepreneurs who advertise in our newsletter, both for 2023 and 2024;
- All those individuals and families who are new or existing members of the MRHS; and
- All our cash donors.

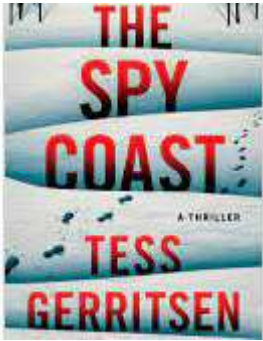
Absent that vital financial support, we couldn't really call ourselves a “society.” We would be a band of enthusiasts with a passion for our communal past, pursuing a hobbyhorse with no real means to share what we discover, showcase what we unearth, or exhibit the treasures we amass because of citizens equally committed to preserving bygone ways of existence.

Come to think of it, perhaps MRHS differs a little from other non-profits, in that we don't just rely on cash donations to make things happen. We are able to operate solely because the people of our community support us in a multiplicity of ways, involving more than just money (although money is good, and donations are always welcome!). We must also acknowledge our indebtedness to the following good souls:

- All our property donors, individuals and families who entrust us with their treasures, which document the way life used to be for our forebears;
- All who voted to make a repository for those treasures a reality by attending the annual town meeting last August, sitting through 31 articles included or appended to the warrant, and then casting their votes to supplement the funds raised through a capital campaign;
- All who helped us put on bake sales on election days by baking and donating sumptuous treats;
- All who participated in planning and executing the annual community picnic in July, which has grown beyond the scope of picnics past in terms of involving other organizations;
- All who presented in our speaker series, sharing their knowledge and voicing their memories; and
- All who lent their time and talents to lead crafts or skills sessions at the Old Homestead over last summer.
- All who contributed to or wrote articles for our newsletter.

We are so very grateful for all of you, and we want you to know how important your contributions have been and continue to be. Take a moment to reflect on what we as a community have accomplished and can continue to accomplish when we work together, ensuring that the past does not slip away, lost and forgotten. That past is what will be featured, front and center, when we open the facility dedicated to our special spot on the midcoast of Maine.

Review of *The Spy Coast* by Tess Gerritsen – Michelle Miller



Tess Gerritsen skillfully paces her reveal about retired CIA agent Maggie Bird and the aftermath of Operation Cyrano that disrupts her new life as “a small-town chicken farmer.” While Gerritsen sets her novel in Purity, ME—a thinly veiled, amusing disguise for Camden—the events of her novel unfold in different countries, even on different continents. Moreover, Gerritsen’s story travels across time and differing characters’ perspectives, building to a satisfying conclusion that leaves open the possibility for sequels. I was especially entranced by the abundance of multifaceted female characters Gerritsen has created in *The Spy Coast*: Maggie, a fiercely independent spy still nursing her primal wound; Jo, a native Mainer who has ascended to the role of acting police chief through a combination of watchful intelligence and tenacity; Callie, a young innocent looking for a female mentor to stand in for her deceased

mother; Bella, an awkward teen, whose villainous father is grooming her as his successor; and Diana, a narcissist who balances all the positivity of Gerritsen’s other women with her self-serving manipulation. However, Gerritsen also provides her readership with other delights, like mouth-watering descriptions of food preparation and vivid depictions of exotic locales and of the Maine landscape. At a Garden Gathering sponsored by the Owls Head Village Library a couple summers ago, Gerritsen compared her creative process to coming up with new recipes. She has again combined the ingredients of good storytelling to engage her audience and provide them with entertaining distraction on a wintry evening.

Recipe by *Helen Harvey*

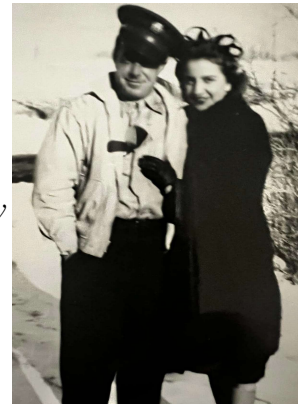
Baked Saturday Night Brown Bread

1 c. white flour	2 c. buttermilk
1 c. graham flour	1 egg, beaten
1/2 c. sugar	2 tsp. soda
1/2 c. molasses	1/2 tsp. salt
1 c. All-Bran	

Mix flours and sugar in large bowl: add molasses and All-Bran.

Mix buttermilk, beaten egg, soda and salt in a small bowl. Add to ingredients in large bowl. Bake in loaf pan at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

*Photo:
Helen &
Maurice Harvey*






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Owls Head Harbor – The Early Years *by Clemice Pease*



Traditions tells us that Owls Head Harbor was a smuggler's paradise very early in history and although we have no proof it is logical to assume it was for those were turbulent times.

This same Mussel Ridge coastal region has a long history with coast defenses both in the Revolutionary War and through the War of 1812. Cyrus Eaton recorded many early stories of the incidents which he was able to get from the very people who participated in them. This peninsula called Owls Head Neck was an early hunting ground for both Indians and white settlers for the Wessaweskeag marshes were always filled with wild geese, duck and other waterfowl. Many of the settlers of the Fox Islands came to the peninsula during the Revolution and the War of 1812 to escape the raids of the British and when hostilities ceased many had learned to love the spot and remained.

By 1840 the ship building business became a thriving business and several shipyards were in operation by Adams, Brown, Emery's, and others. Owls Head Harbor was more sheltered than it is now. A low breakwater extended from the Owls Head Point to the Spindle Ledge in 1852.

A salmon fishery was located near the Point and owned by the Rendells prior to 1800. This later developed into an extensive fishery business. Up to 1820 so many ships were wrecked and cast ashore near this Point of land that the need for a Light became pressing.



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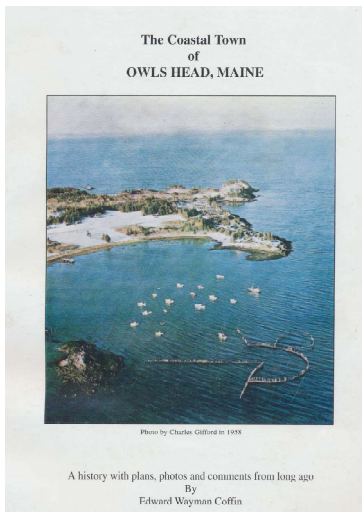
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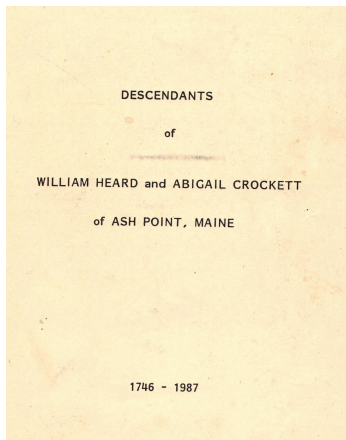
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**\$36 - The Coastal Town of Owls Head, ME
by Edward Coffin (limited quantities)**



**\$10 Mugs (11 oz), \$13 (15 oz) choice of
The "Old Homestead" or "1873" Chart**

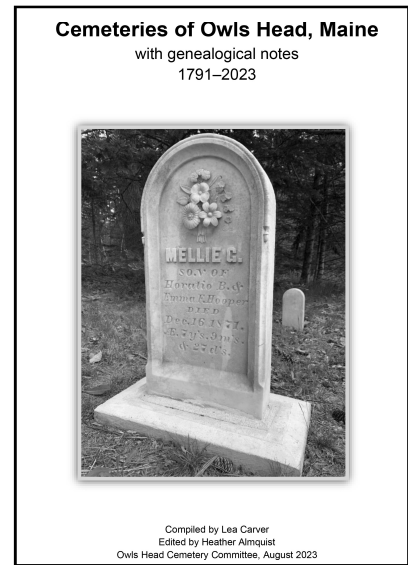


**Reprint with over 300 pages
\$39
Descendants of
William Heard and Abigail Crockett
of Ash Point, Maine**

by Charles Candage

Products for sale

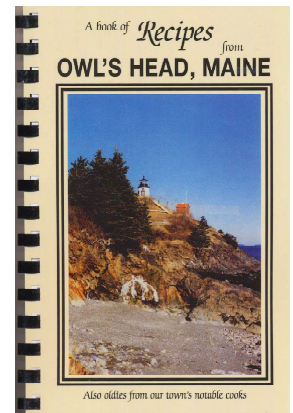
**New Item!!!
\$25 - Cemeteries
of Owls Head
by Lea Carver**



\$49- 1873 of Owls Head canvas chart 16" x 20"



**Ash Point, ME 1930s
Home Movies by
J. Rodney Weeks
DVD - \$15**



**\$15 - Recipes
of Owls Head, Maine**

**Prices do not include shipping if needed
Prices include ME state sales tax
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email us at history@musselridge.org, call or text 207-593-2667

We take paypal/checks/cash

Our Paypal link is: https://paypal.me/MRHS1921?locale.x=en_US

Mussel Ridge Historical Society Volunteer – Membership - Donation Form

Date _____
 Name _____ Phone _____
 Mailing Address _____ Town _____ Zip _____
 Email Address _____

Our newsletter is sent to everyone on our email list and we don't share addresses with anyone.

___ I Would Like TO HELP Preserve the History of Owl's Head in the Following Ways

___ Develop programs ___ Help with fundraising ___ Help on restoring the Homestead

___ Bring food for events or sales ___ Help with events

___ Staff the Homestead ___ I have pictures that could be scanned

___ Research. I am particularly interested in the following areas _____

Have talent/service I could donate _____

___ I would like to help in another way. (Please tell us how) _____

___ I have historical items I might like to donate or loan

___ I am joining the MRHS at the Following Level & My Check is Attached

___ 1 Year Regular (\$10) ___ One Year Family (\$30) ___ 1 Year Sustainer(\$100) ___ 1 Year Benefactor (\$500)

___ 1 Year Business Sustainer (\$250) ___ 1 Year Business Benefactor (\$750)

___ I am making a Tax Deductible Donation to the MRHS for _____ & My Check is Attached

I Would Like the Funds to go to the Following Area

___ General Operations ___ Mussel Ridge Learning Center

___ Old Homestead ___ As the MRHS thinks is best

Signature of Person Accepting the Form _____

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Garthgannon & the Bancroft School

From hotel to camp for children with disabilities to beautiful homes - Garthgannon (also known as Garth Gannon) has had such a history! Growing up in Rockland, I had heard people speak of Garth Gannon, and a friend worked at the camp for two summers. Other than these connections, I had no knowledge of Garthgannon, although I did know that it was located in a beautiful area near the Owls Head Lighthouse.

I will begin with the heroic story of Margaret Bancroft. In the 19th century, most children with disabilities were institutionalized or kept separate from others and did not receive a formal education. Margaret Bancroft, a young educator from New Jersey, vowed to change this situation. In 1883 she founded a school in Haddonfield, NJ, originally named the Bancroft School for the Mentally Deficient and Peculiarly Backward. It became the first private boarding school for children with disabilities. Her unique and innovative program strove to stimulate the physical, mental and spiritual growth of the developmentally disabled. She emphasized the importance of proper nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and daily prayer. Recreational activities and field trips were included in her program. In 1904 the school was (fortunately!) renamed the Bancroft Training School. Margaret Bancroft's dream continues today as a large non-profit organization specializing in neurorehabilitation, autism, and special education. Its residential and day programs are located in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. In 2001 Margaret Bancroft was inducted into the NJ Hall of Fame.



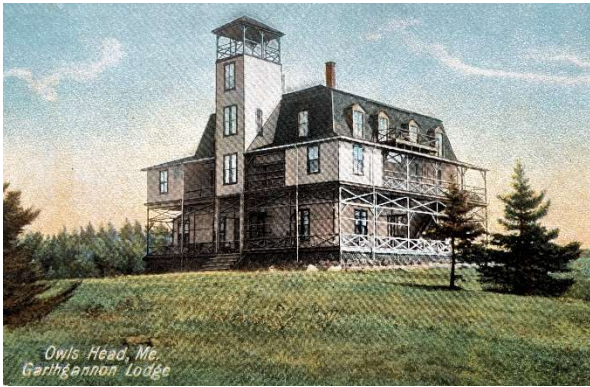
Margaret Bancroft (1854-1912)

The Owls Head connection with the Bancroft School began in 1904, when the school purchased the Simpson Hotel for use as a summer camp to give its students a break from the hot summers in New Jersey. Outbuildings were added, and the hotel was rebuilt and renamed Garthgannon Lodge. The word Garthgannon has always intrigued me, so I googled it and discovered it was the name of an estate in Wales, sometime between 1515 and 1650! A “garth” was a Middle English term for an enclosed yard or garden. Jessie Stone, who had a longtime connection to Bancroft Camp, said the gardens there were so massive and gorgeous that the renowned local artist Anne Kilham came to paint them!

Garthgannon Lodge/Bancroft Camp became the summer home for Bancroft School students and staff, who, in the early years of the camp, traveled from New Jersey to Owls Head by steamship or train. When they arrived, the students enjoyed all the advantages of camp life. According to a 1926 Handbook of Summer Camps, they were introduced to horseback riding, swimming, boating, tennis, and motoring. Camp Crow Feather, on a nearby island, allowed them to have a more rustic camping experience.

Bancroft Camp made a big impact on the community of Owls Head and its environs. Through the years, many people from the area worked at the camp in different capacities, including as counselors, groundskeepers, and secretaries. Several of my friends worked during summers at the Crescent Beach Inn, which catered to family members who were visiting their children at the camp. One friend who has several cottages at Holiday Beach told me that for years she rented to visiting families and staff professionals, some of whom stayed for the whole summer.

My friend Anna worked for two summers at Bancroft Camp while she was a college student, in 1961 and 1962. I asked her about the camp and the students. She replied that they were mostly young adults and adolescents, who came from well-to-do families from all over the country. Summer staff members working with them were not told the students' last names, to protect the privacy of their relatives. Anna remembers working with groups of six to eight, helping them write letters to their families. She described several activities provided to the students, including swimming lessons at a saltwater pool, a combo band, and talent shows with staging crews. The students lived in individual cottages with “house parents” and were served lunch and dinner in the Lodge, which also served as the main meeting place and residence for the staff.



I interviewed Kay Ross Dodge, a lifelong resident of Owls Head whose childhood home was near Bancroft Camp. Next to her home was a large blueberry field. The owners of this field allowed local kids to pick berries after the official raking was done, and Kay's brother Frank took advantage of this offer. While picking, Frank had met and befriended a Bancroft camper, one of several who were allowed to leave the campus without an accompanying staff member. Frank invited this camper, whom I'll call Henry, several times to his house so they could play the piano together. Kay was very small at the time, and Henry and Frank allowed her to pound away on the lower keys, for a few minutes, anyway! Kay related another memory involving Bancroft Camp. She and her little neighborhood friends would stand at the side of the road to watch the campers walking by with their counselors. Many of these counselors were African Americans who worked at the Bancroft School in New Jersey, spending the summers with their students at Bancroft Camp. Growing up in a small Maine town in the 40's and 50's, Kay and her friends had never before seen anyone who looked different from them!

During the 1970's, Bancroft Camp was operated as a year-round residential school for developmentally disabled children. This program was renamed Bancroft North. Kay Dodge was a Girl Scout leader in the 1970's, and she had several Bancroft North girls in her troop. She remembers that one little girl made her a shoeshine kit!

Jessie Stone and her mother worked for many years at Bancroft Camp and Bancroft North. Her mother was a cook during the winter at Bancroft North; staff from the New Jersey school worked at the camp for the summer. As a teenager, Jessie waitressed in the very formal dining room at the camp. Later, during the summer of 1978, she became a camp counselor to fulfill her practicum for her college degree. Jessie was in charge of eight or nine adolescent boys who spent June and part of July in tents on the property. Their days were very scheduled, and Jessie shepherded them from one activity or outing to the next.

According to Ed Coffin, in his book The Coastal Town of Owls Head, Maine, Bancroft closed its camp in 1997; he believed this was due to operating costs and staffing problems. Most of the property, with the exception of the two Leadbetter farmhouses, was sold to a real estate developer. Bancroft was renamed Bancroft Neural Health, and its community-based programs were based at the farmhouses for a few years. In 2003, after almost 100 years in Owls Head, Bancroft transferred its remaining programs to another provider, thus closing a long chapter in the history of Owls Head!

Gail Ladd

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<https://books.google.com>. Digitized 4/13/2010.



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