

Mussel Ridge News

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Owls Head, Maine

Spring 2017 ~ Issue 34



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

By: Rodney B. Weeks

Fatherhood

I was watching an old episode of *Modern Family* on TV the other night and the storyline posed for that night's episode was: What makes a good father?

After watching the three various families on the show go through their portion of the episode, the patriarch of the family ended the show by answering the storyline's question this way: 98% of being a good father is just showing up - being there for your kid.

Like most parents, my wife and I tried our best to give our children not only the very best home, medical care, schools, and clothes that we could afford, but also some adventures and experiences along the way which they would always remember – what the Eastman Kodak Film Company used to call those “Kodak Moments”. As I think back on my own childhood, many of my so called Kodak Moments had nothing to do with expensive outings or exotic trips. Like the storyline in the *Modern Family* TV show the other night, my Kodak Moments had more to do with some adult, (not necessarily my parents or grandparents) paying attention to me and wanting to do something with me.

One such adult for me was a plain, ordinary, humble man from Rockport, Maine. His name was Charlie Doucette. Charlie was my grandfather's handyman. He did whatever needed to be done that my grandfather felt he couldn't do or didn't want to do anymore from painting the barn to weeding the vegetable garden to brush hogging the front field. Charlie was in his 50s, stood about 6 feet tall and weighed about 175 lbs, but his most distinctive physical feature was he had no teeth. Being only 7 years old at the time, I had never met anyone who had no teeth before and I was fascinated by how many funny faces Charlie could make without his teeth. Any time Charlie saw my brothers and me outside playing while he was working he would stick his tongue out at us, make a funny face or chase after us with a hoe or rake pretending that he was going to get us good if he could ever catch us.

Charlie was not only the funniest man I ever met growing up, he was also one of the kindest. Every day he worked, he would stop by the Owls Head General Store, which his brother Casper ran, and he would buy each of us (me and my two brothers) a bag of penny candy. EVERYDAY - 5 days a week – and not just a few pieces either. Each bag usually had 3 of everything. Bazooka Bubble Gum, Root Beer Barrels, Lemon Drops, Butterscotch discs, Bulls Eyes, Fireballs, Jaw Breakers, Tootsie Rolls, Red or Black liquorish ropes, wax candy which had that sweet flavored syrup in them, Mary Janes, Squirrels, Bit-O-Honeys, Nichol Wafers, Orange Gum Slices, Pixie Sticks, etc. The list went on and on and if you paced yourself you could make the bag of candy last all day. Now I don't know how much money a handyman made in those days, but I know Charlie didn't have much money to spare and to do what he did each day for me and my brothers was unbelievable. He just did it because he loved us.

One day, Charlie asked my grandfather if he could have the day off to take us fishing. My grandfather thought that was a great idea. Needless to say, I was so excited about the idea, I couldn't sit still. When the appointed day finally arrived, Charlie came down to get us and we all piled into his beat up old Chevrolet and off we went to Rockport Harbor. When we got there Charlie put a life preserver on each of us and set us down in a small row boat. My older brother Scott was seated in the bow and I shared the middle seat with my brother John. Charlie sat in the back so he could operate the small outboard motor. We pulled away from the dock and proceeded slowly out into the harbor. We traveled along the south

shoreline and stopped when we had gotten about half way out into the harbor. Charlie turned off the engine and had Scott drop the bow anchor. He then handed each of us a 2x4 block of wood with some string wrapped around it. I remember looking at this block of wood and thinking to myself "What am I supposed to do with this? Where is my fishing pole?" Charlie went on to explain that I didn't need any fancy gear to catch fish, just a string, a hook and some bait. He then tied a hook, with some bait on it, to each of our strings and told us to be quiet and lower the hooks slowly into the water. After a while, I casually asked Charlie "What exactly are we fishing for? To which he replied, "Mackerel". As soon as he had said that, I felt a jerk on the end of my line and he said "YOU'VE GOT ONE! - YOU'VE GOT ONE! - PULL HIM IN!"

I was so excited, I didn't know what to do (it isn't like you can reel in a line on a piece of 2x4), so I panicked and dropped my block of wood in the bottom of the boat right at Charlie's feet. Instinctively, Charlie stepped on the block of wood as soon as it hit the floor of the boat, grabbed the string and started pulling the string up with his hands. When Charlie pulled the catch into the boat my brothers crawled over my shoulders to see what I had caught. Sure enough, there flopping around at my feet, was a beautiful 12 inch fish. But I could tell something was very wrong by the expression on Charlie's face. "Pollock" he exclaimed in disgust - not Mackerel". Pollock, according to Charlie was "a garbage fish, no good for eating."

Then he did something extraordinary that I still remember to this day. He grabbed the fish in his hand, unhooked it from my line, stood straight up in the boat, and threw my fish as hard as he could straight up into the air! Charlie's sudden movement startled me completely and I didn't know what to think. All of a sudden I heard a loud screech right over my left shoulder. As I turned to see what was happening I saw a large sea gull swoop down very fast about 8 feet above the water and catch my fish in mid-air! As the sea gull pulled up from its dive, it swallowed my fish whole in one gulp! I couldn't believe what I just saw. No one is going to believe this! WOW!

From that point on, I didn't care if I ever caught a Mackerel. Sure enough, my brother Scott caught the next fish and it was another Pollock. He eagerly handed it over to Charlie who happily threw it up into the air and another lucky sea gull got his dinner that day. The rest of the afternoon continued much in the same way. At the end of the day, we caught about 15 Mackerel, which we kept, and about 10 more Pollock which we fed to the gulls. When we got back to shore, Charlie cleaned the Mackerel and took us home. Later that evening I learned that I didn't particularly like the taste of Mackerel, but I knew I sure liked catching them.

I never got to go fishing with Charlie again, but that "Kodak Moment" Charlie gave me and my brothers that afternoon has stayed with each of us all these many years later and I now realize that it didn't cost Charlie a thing, just a little of his time - showing up - and being there for me and my brothers.

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Owls Head Boys Camp

The summer home at the end of the Ballyhac Road is still known to locals as the “Boys Camp”. In it’s heyday (1940s thru 1960s) many boys enjoyed camp life in Owls Head. According to Carol Ciaravino, her father Casper Ciaravino and his family ran this summer camp in the late 1940's. He was a teacher from NYC who came to Owls Head for the summer. That's how he met my mother (Helen Ross Ciaravino). Paul Ross (Kay Ross Dodge's brother) was one of the campers and he introduced them.



Paul Ross is 3rd from the right in the back row. Picture taken about 1945-46. Can anyone identify the other boys?

MY WORD

As much as carpenters love working with ancient hand tools and gardeners turn the soil with rickety old spades and hoes, writers collect old words and phrases but have little opportunity to use them. Here’s a few our staff reporter discovered while researching topics for the Mussel Ridge NEWS.

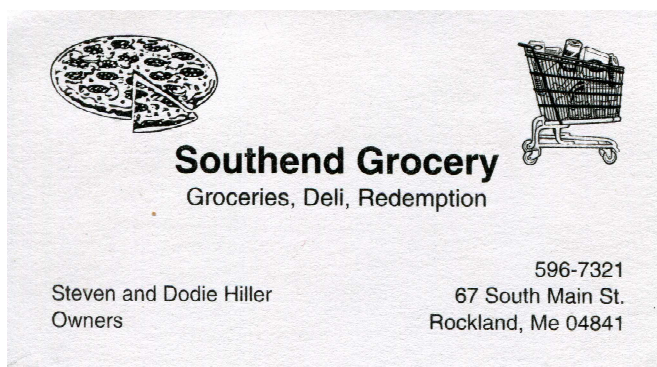
***Dun-** has many definitions but the one most interesting is: “to cure fish after salting, by covering with salt grass in a dark place”.

***Taradiddle-** a trifling falsehood or petty lie; something of little consequence

***Messuage-** (mes-wij) Olde English legal term for all land, crops, buildings & livestock owned by an individual. Often found in ancient deeds, mortgages and wills.

***Glebe lands-** may also be known as Parson’s close or Rectory Manor. Defined as a section of land within an Ecclesiastical region reserved for the pastor’s or priest’s residence.

***Saleratus-** (sal-uh-REY-tus) a chalk like by-product of wood ash lye which was used during the first half of the 1800s as a chemical leavener for baking. When introduced into bread or biscuit dough it created carbon dioxide gas causing the dough to be light and flakey. However, it was also thought to cause people’s teeth to fall out and was blamed for a multitude of unexplained deaths of people around the country. By 1860 it was replaced with the early forms of baking soda.



HEAR, YE !!

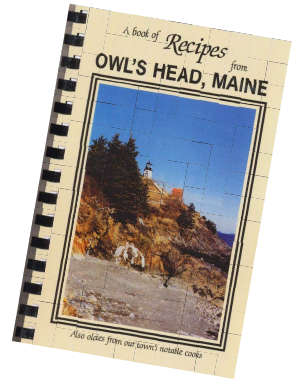
HEAR, YE !!

HEAR, YE !!

The Mussel Ridge Historical Society's farm known as "The Old Homestead" (453 Ash Point Drive) will be open for the season June 21, 2017, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. That's two weeks earlier than past years! We'll be open every Wednesday from 2 to 4p.m. throughout the Summer with our last day set for September 27th. Also, some of our hosts and hostesses plan to hold demonstrations, exhibits or informative discussions on our town's history, salted with their own personal experiences.

And, as usual, we'll have a good supply of literary gifts on hand for you to purchase for a special friend or to save as a souvenir for yourself.

- *The Coastal Town of OWLS HEAD, MAINE* by Edward Wayman Coffin is priced at \$32
- The second edition of, *A book of Recipes from Owls Head, Maine* is just \$15
- Our newest gift, a box of six "Old Homestead" note cards w/envelopes is only \$10
(all prices quoted above include State sales tax)



Can't get to our Old Homestead during the daytime hours? We have those items on sale at [Blue Yonder Coastal Artisans Gift Shop](#) in the lobby of the Knox County Regional Airport on Ash Point Drive.

OR: You can order Mussel Ridge Historical Society literature by simply filling out the order blank below. Add \$3 for postage and we'll send it on it's way.

ORDER FORM

- _____ copy(s) of "A Book of Recipes from Owls Head, Maine" at \$15.00 each.
_____ copy(s) of "The Coastal Town of Owls Head, Maine" at \$32.00 each.
_____ box(es) of note cards (each box contains six cards) at \$10.00 for each box.

Total amount of enclosed check \$ _____. Please make your check payable to the Mussel Ridge Historical Society and send it to:

Mr. Rodney B. Weeks
43 Lucia Beach Road
Owls Head, ME 04854

_____ Please **DELIVER** my order to the address below:

_____ Please **MAIL** (*) my order to the address below:

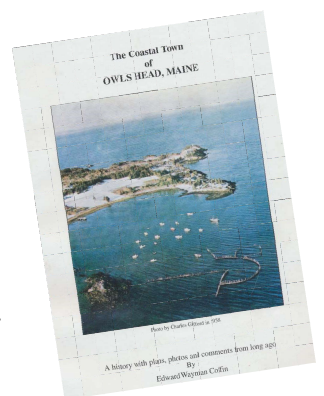
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(*) I have included an additional \$3.00 per item ordered to cover postage costs.

Dedication

Kay Ross Dodge

The Mussel Ridge Historical Society would like to dedicate this 2nd printing of *A Book of Recipes from Owls Head, Maine* to Kay R. Dodge, our President for many years.



Kay was on the original K.A.M.P. Committee which put this cookbook together in 1994 and is one of our best cooks; her recipes are prominently displayed throughout. She is perhaps best known for her delicious Finnish dessert bread called Pulla, which people line up for and quickly sells out each time the MRHS has a fundraising event.

A civic minded person, Kay was a Town Selectman for many years, the Registrar of Voters, an officer of the Owls Head Village Library and President of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society. Kay has also served on and headed a number of other committees all for the betterment of our community.

This rededication of the Owls Head cookbook is just a small expression of the appreciation, admiration and gratitude we all have for Kay – we need more community-oriented people like her.

The Mussel Ridge Historical Society

Tom Christie, Vice President
Stuart Thro, Treasurer

Bonnie Dyer Post, Recording Secretary
Marty Shaw, Corresponding Secretary

Our Spring, Summer and Fall Calendar

May 21- **Ice cream social** 2:00 To 4:00 p.m. at Owl's Head Community Building, Ash Point Dr. All are welcome.

June 13- **Baked food sale** at the polls, Owl's Head Community Building. Proceeds will go toward the day to day expenses of Mussel Ridge Historical Society. Donations of baked food can be dropped off at 8:00 a.m. For info contact Kaye Dodge, at 596-6879

June 14- **Flag Day**, display your colors proudly

June 21- **The Old Homestead** at 453 Ash Point Dr. opens for the season 2-4p.m. Tom Christie will have on display his collection of Owl's Head Lighthouse post cards, some going back into the 1800s. He'll also have a few old pictures of Owl's Head homes and people we need help in identifying. We plan to have the Old Homestead open every Wednesday, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. thru Sept. 27th.

July 16- **It's our annual picnic** noon to 3p.m. at The Old Homestead, 453 Ash Point Dr. If you like hand cranked ice cream, hot dogs and cold lemonade, old timey music, kids games and forgotten skills demonstrated, then this is the place for you! It's free to all who come, though we will have a donation jar for folks to show their appreciation. Please bring a family size salad or dessert or a "picnic" style hot food dish. Questions? Contact Kaye Dodge, at 596-6879

August- **Mussel Ridge NEWS** Summer issue will be out around the 10th of the month. We'd love to publish your pictures, old recipes, news clippings from the past or even answer a question you may have about the history of our area. Contact TomC. 207-594-2438

Sept. 12- **Annual meeting** of Mussel Ridge Historical Society, 9:30 a.m. at O.H. Community Building. This will include election of officers and any other business that requires the full membership to be present. All members must have their annual dues (\$5.00) paid before the meeting starts.

Nov. 7- **Election Day**; M.R.H.S. may have a baked food sale at the polls. Watch for details

Nov.- **Mussel Ridge NEWS** Fall issue will hit the streets around the 10th. We're always grateful for your stories, anecdotes, or any other peeks into your family's history.

One of my Favorite Stores in Rockland, Maine

Part 2 ... Eastman's Barber Shop

"Come here young man" I heard a voice say to me. It was my turn to get my first haircut. I drew Seth as my barber that day and he picked me up and gently sat me down on a pine board that he had placed across the arms of the barber's chair for me to sit on. He then wrapped the huge barber's apron around me and fastened it tightly around my neck. Seth then turned the barber's chair around so I could see myself in the huge mirror that was on the wall. There was a shelf just



under the mirror which had all sorts of colorful bottles of heavily scented potions, lotions and powders. I was told to place my chin on my chest and not move. Seth then started up his clippers and zip, zip, zip it went, cutting from the back of my head to the front. As I tried to roll my eyes up so I could see what was going on in the mirror a huge chunk of my hair fell off my head and down into my lap. In about thirty seconds the whole ordeal was over, except for the application of the wax. Once Seth had perfected the "snowplow" in front of my head, he spun the barber's chair around again and there was my mother standing there. She had witnessed the entire proceeding and as she helped me out of the barber's chair, she hugged me and told me how big and brave I had been. I just shrugged my shoulders as if it was no big deal, but as I walked out of the barber shop that day I remember taking one last look at my new haircut and thinking I looked

ridiculous. I have since suffered through a lot of bad hair styles/haircuts over the years and I always console myself with the same thought I had that day – Oh well, it will grow back again soon enough.

EPILOGUE:

Paul & Seth worked together from the opening of the shop after WWII until Seth's death. Paul tried to keep the shop going after Seth's passing, but without his life long partner and friend, his heart just wasn't in it and he decided to retire and close Eastman's Barber Shop's doors for good.

I feel fortunate to have treated both of my sons to a number of "summer" haircuts at Eastman's Barber Shop before it closed. Each time I took my boys there, I would look for my old girlfriend, but sadly the calendar was long gone, the victim of the PC movement I suspect. The smoke was long gone too, much to my dismay as in the intervening years I had picked up the tobacco habit myself and now I could talk, inhale and blow cigarette smoke out my nose too – I just couldn't do it inside the shop anymore.

The magazines were still there and that gave me some comfort that the men's club that I had joined in 1956 hadn't completely disappeared. Some of the old timers were still there getting their Flat Top haircut, but I never could talk either one of my sons into getting a Princeton or a Flat Top haircut. They always wanted something a little more conventional so they always got the Leave it to Beaver haircut.

Where the main feature of getting a Princeton haircut was having wax put in your hair to create the "snowplow", the main feature of getting a Leave it to Beaver haircut was getting Lucky Tiger hair tonic sprinkled/splashed all over your head. Seth always made a big production for my boys with his application of Lucky Tiger hair tonic. First, he would take the bottle from his shelf and tip it upside down over the boys head. He would then shake the bottle vigorously, splashing enough of the forest green colored hair tonic to make their heads entirely wet with the stuff. Next he would take both of his hands

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and curl his fingers into a claw shape and begin furiously rubbing the hair tonic into the boys' scalp. When he had finished with this exercise the boys were laughing at themselves in the mirror because they looked like they had stuck their fingers into a light socket. But not to worry, because all of this activity on Seth's part was just a set up for his final finishing touch. With as much flourish as he could muster, Seth would whip the comb from his breast pocket and carefully and precisely make a perfect part in my son's hair and then slowly and carefully comb it over to the opposite side of his head. The end result was my boy's hair looked wet and oily and was stuck to his head. My wife loved it because it made the boys look as though they had just stepped out of a Norman Rockwell painting and they smelled so good.

WARNING: Should your barber still own a bottle of Lucky Tiger hair tonic, please be advised that after two or three days, your hair will eventually dry out and the grooves from the barber's comb will fade, however, the scent (really the smell in my opinion) of Lucky Tiger hair tonic will linger in your car for days.

Submitted by Rodney Weeks

A SURPRISE GIFT

Our heartiest "Thanks" goes out to Wilbur Weeks for the Redware match safe he recently donated to our archives. We'll likely display it in the Old Homestead on Ash Point Dr. Not being familiar with Redware nor match safes, our staff reporter paid a visit to Google and found a few surprises.

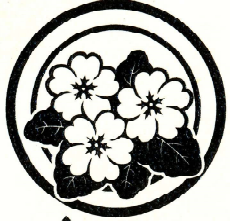


First surprise— Redware is an ancient form of pottery that was made by natives living in the area now occupied by the States of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia long before the Europeans ever set foot on this shore. Reddish colored clay was dug from the bottom of streams and estuaries then formed into bowls, jugs and a variety of hand implements. Because they were primitively formed, and had not been fired in a kiln but simply dried in the sun, they were prone to cracks and crumbling after only a few usages.

Surprise #2— Europeans were very skilled in building kilns and firing pottery. When teaching the natives how to fire their redware in a kiln, the settlers included techniques for sealing their bowls and other vessels to make them more water tight. This exchange of skills certainly must have enhanced the friendship and respect between the two cultures.

Surprise #3— The term "match safe" is given to the item because it was usually hung close to the fireplace or woodstove. Since clay doesn't absorb heat as a metal container would, there is much less danger of the matches accidentally igniting.

The match safe Wilbur gave us is made similar to the early settlers' pottery and is thought to be about 150 years old. The ribbing on the side was for striking matches against. I should also point out the matches pictured with the safe were a gift to Tom Christie from Susie Ames of Rockland. They, too are of the 1860s era. Matches of that time were made in small sheets with a cut-line between the individual matches. This was partly to keep the matches from rubbing together and igniting. Too, it was much easier to pull a sheet of matches, (as opposed to scrambling for an individual match) from your vest pocket.



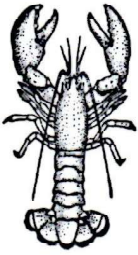
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FROM THE DUSTY GARDENER'S NOTEBOOK

Fiddleheads & Ramps make a brief but memorable appearance across Northern New England this time of year. Tasting somewhat like asparagus, a fiddlehead is the tightly curled tip of an ostrich fern, though other species can be used. A note of caution, when harvesting fiddleheads, do not pick all the heads off the fern but leave at least one third of the heads for the fern's survival. Be sure to wash thoroughly and cook by boiling them 5-7 minutes or steam them for 10-12 minutes.

Ramps make a great substitute for onions and garlic. Though a ramp's raw flavor is more pungent, it will diminish with cooking. Like fiddleheads, the harvesting of ramps must leave a healthy plant for future harvests. Take only one or two of the stems and roots from the plant. Planting your own patch of ramps is always a good conservation measure. Ramp seeds and bulbs can be purchased in many local garden supply stores or online outlets.

Historically, fiddleheads and ramps, along with a variety of other edible plants, were not just harvested wildly but cultivated into the garden of the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq and Penobscot natives. Interestingly, the natives who may have migrated from the nearest eastern regions of Russia were quite familiar with these plants and would have quickly recognized their value as a food source. Fiddleheads and ramps were shared the Acadian settlers of the early 18th century and later with the United Empire Loyalist, (colonists those who chose not to oppose the British during the American Revolution). Today, fiddleheads and ramps continue to be a favorite North American Spring delight.

