

Mussel Ridge News

*A Free Publication of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society
Owls Head, Maine*

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MUSSEL RIDGE LEARNING CENTER

The collections of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society reflect you, our community, especially what you have inherited from the past of our spot on midcoastal Maine. Currently many of the artifacts in our collections are spread across a wide geographic area, sometimes stored in less-than-ideal conditions, with wide variations in temperature and humidity. Establishing a central repository for those keys to our heritage not only safeguards them for the future but also makes them available for viewing to the general populace.

We want you to understand what will fill the Mussel Ridge Historical Society Learning Center once we have raised enough funding to construct that facility. Currently, we intend to subdivide the facility into a permanent collection and rotating exhibits. The permanent collection will house books, magazines, and scrapbooks covering Maine in general and Owls Head and the Mussel Ridge Islands in particular. We also wish to establish a family history section, where records of local families—including a multitude of photographs—can facilitate genealogical research. This section will contain records pertaining to all cemeteries located within our area, currently 13 in number. Valuable surveys will find a home in the Learning Center:

- 1853 and 1873 map of Owls Head
- Pre-1921 map of South Thomaston/Owls Head
- Survey of Ash Island subdivision
- Survey of Ashmere Terrace subdivision
- Survey of Plaisted Preserve
- Survey of Ash Point Preserve
- Survey of Owls Head Harbor (Richard Carver) Park.

Rotating through the Learning Center will be exhibits that explain the significance of commerce to our community: fishing, lobstering, ship- and boatbuilding, quarrying, tourism, merchandise selling, and farming. Memorabilia from social clubs and diaries would testify to the pursuit of leisure and camaraderie in our community. The area's relationship to the Knox County Regional Airport, including its role in both war- and peacetime, would provide perspective and context to a relationship of long standing. And, of course, the Learning Center would pay homage to the service of the area's veterans.

In addition, some signage from former establishments, many of them inns, will be on display.

Two of many items for display



*Grape Shot Cannonball
from the War of 1812.
Embedded in a beam from
a cottage at Lucia Beach*



*Old "Community" sign from the days of
Nellie Reed's Chicken Pie Suppers*

Garden Snippets

Once upon a time, there was a very pretty little church in South Thomaston, Maine. It sat on a rise overlooking the Weskeag River and was visible from most places right there in the village. The members of the congregation loved their church and the folks in the community, and did what they could to serve their neighbors.



At one point, someone got the idea of having a memorial garden. Folks could donate plants for the garden in memory of loved ones who had died, or in honor of people still living. Or just because they wanted to be a part of the project.

It was a lovely garden—in the center of the parking lot, so anyone could enjoy it from any direction. There was an arbor in it, and several weddings happened there. There were two big flat rocks, so people could sit and enjoy being in the garden. For many years it was a treasure to the folks in the church.

But time went by, as time has a way of doing, and people got too busy or tired or old to work in the garden. Weeds began to flourish; many plants died; others grew too large and took over their spot.

After a while, a group of three church women decided it was time to make some changes. Folks were invited to take whatever plants from the garden that they had given, and a helpful neighbor brought his Kubota over and cleared the garden area. The women, and some very helpful helpers, did a lot of topsoil and compost delivering and spreading. The group asked for, and received, plant and financial donations. Maybe because the women were excited about the garden, the members of the church began to get excited about it, too. At the end of the first season, the garden looked as though it had been there longer than that.

In order to nourish the earth, the gardeners chose to have as many native plants as possible to encourage pollinators of every sort. And they would avoid invasives of every sort.

The garden is now in its second season and continues to improve. There are more people helping with the work of the garden—planting, weeding, and watering.

The garden has been a lot of work for all who have worked on it, but those people are proud of the work they have done and the results that have grown.

You are welcome to visit that garden anytime. You can drive in the church driveway and make a loop around the circle. Maybe others will be inspired to take on a challenge that seems too much—but isn't.

Marty Shaw



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June 29th Summer Speaker and Potluck Dinner

“Haunting Houses and Resident Spirits,”



“Raconteur” is a good word to describe Phelps Bristol: he tells engaging stories, delivers punchlines with aplomb, and, since 2019, has composed thought-provoking poetry (Phelps also plays a wicked game of bridge, but that’s an aside). We’ve asked Phelps to speak at a potluck supper on Thursday, June 29, in the Community Room of the Owls Head Town Office at 5:00 p.m. To learn a little more about this interesting man before the upcoming event, I sat down with Phelps and his wife Sally.

Since Phelps has been asked to speak about memories of life on Ash Point, a presentation he is calling “Haunting Houses and Resident Spirits,” I asked him to share how he came to know Owls Head. Not native to Maine, Phelps was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, one month before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Together with his two older sisters and parents, Phelps moved to West Virginia, where his father found work building “Flying Boxcars,” World War II cargo-carrying planes.

When Phelps was about to start school, his family answered a call for assistance from Phelps’s great-aunt, who lived on Ash Point: Aunt Carroll needed a caretaker, and the family moved north to assist. Phelps attended a one-room schoolhouse, one of three then active in Owls Head. Life with Aunt Carroll was Phelps’s introduction to Maine, the beginning of a lifelong love affair with the Pine Tree State, with time away experiencing other parts of the world, of course.

Permanently relocating to Owls Head in November 2003, Phelps and Sally have been active in Rockland’s Chamber of Commerce for 10 years. Phelps has also been a docent at the Owls Head Light since 2009, formerly at the Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse as well. Phelps and Sally still succumb to wanderlust every now and again and especially enjoy visiting their son, daughter-in-law, and two talented granddaughters in Grafton, Massachusetts.

Phelps has hinted that he plans to relate anecdotes, read a few poems, and may even sing a song. Mark your calendars. It promises to be an entertaining evening.

**June 29 - 5pm, Potluck followed by Phelps Bristol’s talk.
Place : Owls Head Community Building**



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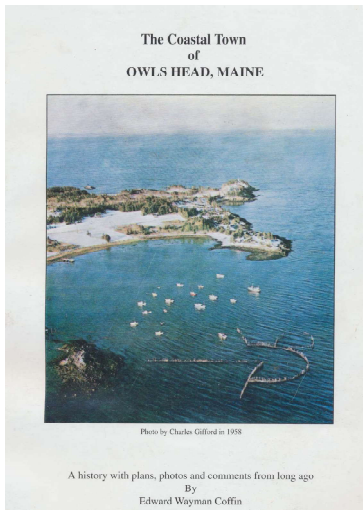
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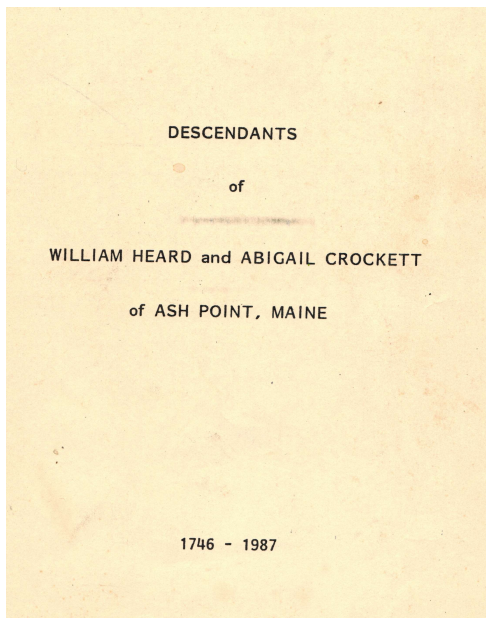
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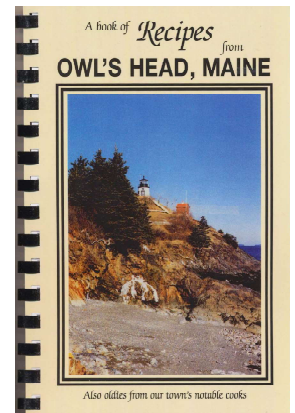
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The "Old Homestead" or "1873" Chart**



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



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Owls Head Cemetery Committee News!

This is the first article in a series about Owls Head Cemeteries. The Hall Cemetery is the oldest burial ground in Owls Head. According to Eaton's History, one acre of land was set aside as a cemetery in 1828 (of course Owls Head was part of Thomaston then). It is located right next to Route 73 at the Head of the Bay. William Hix was perhaps the first person buried in what would become the cemetery in 1791. I say perhaps because the Owls Head Cemetery Committee (OHCC) can only go by headstone data since there are no burial records. Miney Brown Perry is mentioned in Eaton's as another early burial there, in 1807. She died at the age of 44. Her husband Joseph Perry is one of 6 Revolutionary War veterans buried at Hall.

There are approximately 223 burials in this cemetery, but the Owls Head Cemetery Committee (OHCC) is certain there are many more folks interred without headstones. Furthermore there has been much confusion regarding burials in this cemetery and/or the adjoining MacPhail since both cemeteries have been called Hix, Hall, and Head of the Bay Cemetery! From old Burpee Funeral Home records (circa 1883) the back, left corner of the cemetery was a pauper's area. Today there are a number of natural stones that are in line and relatively evenly spaced which leads us to suspect they too mark graves.

The Hall Cemetery is a typical cemetery of the 19th century in that the headstones all face west. The graves are directly behind the headstones, with the departed's head nearest the stone, and the body facing east due to religious beliefs. Most of the burials also had foot stones which marked the actual length of the grave, but over the years many were damaged or removed. A number of the headstones here are tablets, long rectangular stones that were simply buried about a 1/3 of the length deep. The two most common types of stone here are white marble and Thomaston black marble (TBM) which is grey with white marbling. TBM was quarried locally and generally has held up very well over time. TBM can be hard to read, so the best time of day to visit this cemetery to admire the headstones is in the afternoon on a sunny day.

In 2017 the OHCC conducted a conservation project to repair and reset many of the damaged and leaning stones. The results were amazing! The support for this project was testament to the town's commitment to preserving our history.

Below is an amusing article about Lucretia Philbrook Estey/Estes (1794-1896) who is buried in an unmarked grave in the Hall Cemetery.

And one of the best examples of a Thomaston black marble headstone in this cemetery.

Lea Carver

The Republican Journal

17 Dec 1896, Thu · Page 6

Butter 26 Years Old.

Aunt Lucretia Estey, who died a few months since at the Head of the Bay, aged 101, put down a jar of butter 26 years ago, which after her death was found in her trunk. She had lived 18 years with Mrs. Julia Ash and Miriam Hall in the house where she died, and all this time the trunk was in her sleeping room. She gave the butter to the woman who took care of her in her last sickness. It is a curiosity, but of course never will be used, although it looks very well. [Rockland Star.]



**Mussel Ridge Historical Society
Volunteer – Membership - Donation Form**

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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 _____

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____ Old Homestead ____ As the MRHS thinks is best

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BONNIE POST - A Longtime Member of the MRHS

Owl's Head—Bonnie Post, of Owl's Head, who dedicated a lifetime to helping others in myriad ways, died peacefully on January 29, 2023, at the Owl's Head Homestead, after a period of declining health.

Bonnie was born in Santa Barbara, California, on January 27, 1944, to Sgt. Francis L. and Mary Foster Dyer, just two days after her father departed for military service in England. After the war, when her father finally met his daughter, the family returned to their roots and purchased their “forever home” in Owl's Head Village.

Bonnie attended the one-room Timber Hill School before entering the first class in the newly built Owl's Head Central School. In 1962, she graduated in the last class at the old Rockland High School on Lincoln Street, where she actively participated in everything from Latin and French Clubs to the National Honor Society, the Debate Team, and the National Forensic League. From there, she headed to Hanover, NH, receiving a BS/RN degree in 1965 from the Mary Hitchcock School of Nursing, where nurses still wore starched white dresses and caps.

Some years later, Bonnie received a B.S. in Education from Vermont's Goddard College, where her Senior Study project focused on the ecology of Maine's Metinic Island.

On June 19, 1965, in a candlelight ceremony, Bonnie and Frank E. Post became the first couple married at the new Rockland Congregational Church. Two years later, they headed to Ketchikan, Alaska, where Frank served in the Coast Guard and Bonnie founded a multicultural day-care center. Together, they also helped establish a popular coffeehouse, a gathering place where everyone was welcome.

Following their Alaska stint, the young couple returned to Maine, where Bonnie founded Coastal Child Care, filling a critical need for Rockland and surrounding communities.

In 1974, Bonnie became a Maine State Representative, the first Democrat elected to the Knox County seat in 40 years. During her professional career, she often assisted her mother with many town projects, including the various fundraising efforts of the Owl's Head Grange and the Mussel Ridge Historical Society. She was often the auctioneer for the annual MRHS's annual auction where funds were raised to benefit the restoration of the “Old Homestead.” After her mother's passing in 2004, and her own retirement, she became more actively involved with the historical society, with a special interest in the history of the town's one room schools, one of which she had attended.

A special thank you to Bonnie's family for the gift of documents and photos for our **Mussel Ridge Learning Center**.

The “**Mary Foster Dyer**” collection will be recognized in memory of Bonnie and Lucy Dyer Levenseler's mother.



Summer Hours : Wed thru Sat: 10 - 5

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Homestead Summer Activities from 2-4 pm on Wednesdays

The Mussel Ridge Historical Society has regularly opened the Old Homestead on Wednesdays from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. during the summer months—July, August, September—but this year, we thought we'd add something extra-special to entice visitors to gather there. We've organized a series of demonstrations and activities, many involving traditional crafts in danger of dying out if they are not preserved by future generations. The following schedule (tentatively) sets out our schedule for the 13 Wednesdays involved. If the weather does not oblige us, or if someone catches a summer cold, things may change, but here's what we've planned thus far:

July 5 Join us to make ice cream from a recipe published in the *Owls Head Cookbook*. Copies of the recipe will be available to participants. And, of course, you can sample the creamy dessert!

July 12 We will host a spinner, Marty Shaw's daughter Sarah, who will show us how the distaff side operates.

July 19 John Walker will demonstrate how to (re)cane a chair.

July 26 Maynard Stanley will whip up something delicious, perhaps even using the fireplace at the Old Homestead. Maynard's pioneer cooking recreates how our forebears handled meal preparation.

August 2 Come enjoy the dulcet sounds of recorders and a bassoon and the sweet twang of fiddles. A musical quartet and a duo will entertain us this fine afternoon!

August 9 Carolyn Philbrook will show us how to churn butter. Don't worry! There will be samples of the sweet, creamy spread available for consumption with some homemade bread.

August 16 Maynard Stanley returns to make kettle corn, a delicious snack!

August 23 Doreen Bickford will lead a session in cornhusk dollmaking. Materials provided—just bring your nimble fingers and creativity!

August 30 Kay Dodge will show us how to braid rugs, using wool scraps that might otherwise wind up in the dumpster. How crafty is she!

September 6 "Writing Naturally/Writing in Nature": Join Michelle Miller in the garden of the Old Homestead to compose either a poem or a prose piece inspired by what your senses tell you about the natural world.

September 13 Jason Philbrook will snap photos of folks wearing period hats. Come have your picture made. Also early photography equipment will be on display.

September 20 Joanna and Russ will show you how to make sauerkraut. We may have to tap Morse's for samples of a finished product, but you'll leave with the knowhow of making this delicious side.

September 27 Carolyn Philbrook will press cider, and I'm sure there'll be taste-testing afterward.

None of these activities comes at a charge, but the MRHS is always grateful for your support. Donations will be cheerfully accepted. In addition, many of these demonstrations will take place outside, so remember to bring your

- Camp chair,
- Insect repellent, and
- Sunscreen, maybe even a hat.

You may not need the above items, but if you don't bring them, you know you'll want them. It's a corollary of Murphy's Law!

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