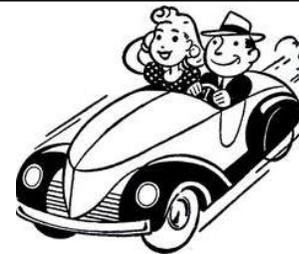


# Mussel Ridge News

*A Free Publication of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society*

*Owls Head, Maine*

**Summer 2017 ~ Issue 35**



## THEY KEPT THE LIGHT BURNING

Those ads in travel magazines inviting folks to spend a week-end on some lighthouse amuse me. A group of local citizen have apparently formed a society, obtained a lease on the light tower and, now find they are facing horrendous maintainance costs. Offering the public a chance to play light keeper, (sans entry to the lantern room at the top of the tower), seems to be an answer to their problem. For a fee you'll have the priveledge of washing the windows or sweeping off the veranda on the keeper's cottage and then kick back with a glass of merlot as the sun sets over the ocean. If you're lucky, a schooner will hove to on the lee side of your lighthouse and drop anchor. Musn't forget to strike the colors precisely at sunset.

The truth is being a lighthouse keeper, during any era, was just a job. It fed the family. Yes, they polished a lot of brass and cleaned the lens every day and sometimes twice if it was extremely foggy, or rainy, or dusty, or the dog sneezed, or.... Likewise, the windows were washed and wiped dry to avoid any water spots on the glass. During the winter months, keepers smeared whale oil or other clear lubricant on the lantern room windows to keep them from iceing over during the storms. This task was done between manually sounding the fog signal every few seconds until the storm passed. Every morning standby batteries and generator were checked and tended. This man's family depended upon everything working properly as much for their financial welfare as any ship's captain relyed on it for safe passage through inclement weather. Keepers could be, and some were, dismissed for the slightest discrepancy.

From the construction of the first lighthouse along America's coast, lightkeepers have had difficulty in maintaining them. It must be remembered that in the early days, assignment to a keeper's job was a political appointment and the opposing political party had no qualms about taking their revenge out on the various appointees. More often than not, the budget for lighthouse repairs and maintainance was far less than the keeper's needs. He was expected to bring his station into compliance with the inspector's requirements by whatever materials he could scrounge or had immediately at hand. Any excess materials found on the premises were often confiscated and sent to another lightkeeper; usually one the inspector favored such as a relative or devotee of a political party.

Isaac Sterns, the first lightkeeper on Owl's Head, was appointed by President John Quincy Adams, much to great dismay of Auditor of the Treasury, Stephen Pleasanton. Keeper Sterns routinely had to get by with short supplies, inferior materials, and forfeiture of any excess supplies. Auditor Pleasanton often bragged about being tight with lighthouse funds. In 1825 keeper Sterns was paid \$350 annually, not quite a dollar a day. In today's economy that salary would equate to \$8237.49, far below our curent poverty level.

Added to the political annoyances, were the monumental logistics of getting supplies and materials to an isolated lighthouse. Most shoreside lights were as difficult to reach as an offshore light. It was common for the keeper to transport his supplies by water craft as opposed to hiking in on foot. In 1841, Owl's Head lightkeeper Penley Haines was required to travel three miles, for his supplies, sometimes slogging out on snowshoes in the winter. And one hundred and twenty years later in the 1960s Melvin Davis, keeper at Owl's Head, had the adventure of hiking through hip deep snow in the dead of night to find a working telephone so he could send out a "Notice to Marriners" notifying the world that his light and bell were inoperative. (This was due to downed power wires and the station's generator malfunctioning). Then he hiked back to find his wife and five children huddled around their kitchen oil stove attempting to keep warm. Winters on every lighthouse, any place in the world, are always a completely different environment than in the Summer.

I encourage you to try lightkeeping for a week-end. At some point during the stay ask yourself if you could live there for ten or fifteen years— and accept \$22.54 per day for wages.

## WE NEED A LITTLE HELP

It's a funny little thing about historical research. Quite often a researcher can find a surprising amount of information on a person who lived four hundred years ago and not enough on someone born forty years ago to even begin writing anything down. Our research department is attempting to compile biographies on each of the lightkeepers who served on Owl's Head Light. Since the light was built in 1825, there have been a total of 29 keepers with one man serving two separate tours. We have fairly extensive data on the earliest men and their families, (yes, the families were an integral part of the lightkeeping job), but any info on the people who served during the 1970s to 1989, when the light was automated, is really scarce.

Beginning with this issue of the Mussel Ridge NEWS we'll be introducing our readers to a couple of lightkeepers we're looking for. We'll give you their name and the years they spent on Owl's Head Light, and any information we may have gathered. Some may still be living in the State of Maine. If you know either of the fellows listed below, please ask them to contact Tom Christie, 207-594-2438.

Dave Bennett, (June 1970- Dec. 1973); We know he was born in Maine and in the U. S. Coast Guard. Dave, Jane and Chris Bennett stayed in Owl's Head after their tour on the light. Dave was a lieutenant in the Volunteer Fire Department, and participated in our town's celebration of the nation's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Joseph A. Gourde, Jr. (1976-1978); We know he was in the U.S. Coast Guard; in 1996 he lived on Barter Road, Rockland, Me. and was affiliated with Callahanpro Inc., 10 Pheasant Dr. Rockland, ME.

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### A Recipe from our Owls Head Cookbook that has just been reprinted.

#### Fish Chowder *by Evelyn Ross*

3 or 4 slices of salt pork  
1 large onion  
3 c. whole milk  
Salt & pepper to taste

2 c. sliced potatoes  
3/4 to 1lb. haddock fillets  
1 large can evaporated milk  
Little flour

Fry slices of salt pork til brown. removed pork scraps and save. On top of pork fat, add sliced potatoes, sliced onions, salt, and pepper and lay fish on top. Shake a little flour on top, for thickening, and add water to nearly top of potatoes. Cover and bring to a boil; lower heat and cook til potatoes are tender and fish flakes. Do not stir. Add milk and piece of butter.

Reheat slowly (do not boil) Taste for seasoning. Set aside for ripening. Reheat when ready to eat. Sprinkle crumbled pork scraps over chowder.

My family likes to sprinkle a little nutmeg over chowder when we eat it.



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

### Just Another Fish Story - By: Rodney B. Weeks

In the last issue of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society's Newsletter I told the story of how Charlie Daucet provided me with one of those treasured childhood memories by taking me fishing. In an effort to provide a similar experience for my own children I asked my brother, John to help me take my three children out fishing and on a beautiful day in July off of Waterman's Beach we headed out. I stayed in the bow of the boat this time, John ran the outboard engine and my three kids were trapped between us on the middle seat. John supplied each of my kids with their own fishing rod (no blocks of wood with string wrapped around them for my spoiled kids) and he baited the hooks for each of them. John supervised and let the two older kids cast their lines out while I let my youngest boy just drop his line over the side of the boat.

One hour passed and then another and if it wasn't for the casting practice my two older children were getting, this opportunity to provide a so-called Kodak Moment for my kids was rapidly turning into one big bomb. I looked at my brother and he nodded his silent agreement that perhaps it was time to call it a day before the kids got so discouraged they would never want to go fishing again. So I got the kid's rods stowed away and just as my brother was about to put his rod down, his line gave him a little tug. He quickly told the kids to look at the end of his rod to see if there was any movement at the tip. Sure enough the tip began to slowly bend down. John then started a running commentary on how to reel a fish in. Sometimes he would stop reeling the fish in and let the line out a little to let the fish run.

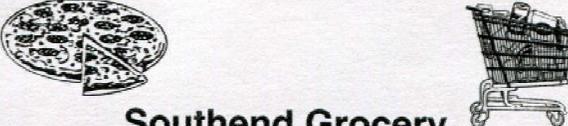
All of the sudden, the fish practically pulled the rod right out of John's hands. Instinctively, he grabbed the handle harder and yelled that he didn't know what was going on, but he had caught something much larger than a Mackerel or a Pollock. In fact, whatever it was had started to pull the boat behind it as it was attempting to get away! By this time the kids were standing up in the boat jumping up and down with excitement. Then, just as quickly as it started, John's line went slack. Instinctively, John knew whatever he had caught was doubling back toward the boat and attempting to go under us. John turned around in his seat and just as he had transferred his rod from one hand to the other, everyone one in the boat froze. What we saw - we couldn't believe.

There, only two feet below the surface of the water, coming right at us, was a six foot adult male harbor seal with John's fish in its mouth. There wasn't anything we could do except sit there and watch this monster pass right underneath our boat. Quickly realizing he didn't want to lose his rod or catch a harbor seal; John grabbed his knife and cut the line. Once the line had left his rod, everyone, momentarily, sat in silence, dumbfounded and shaken by what had just happened. It had happened so fast.

Instinctively, as a father, I began to run all of the horrible possibilities of what could have happened through my mind and it wasn't pleasant. That seal could have easily capsized our little 10 foot row boat and we were a good distance from shore. I remember thinking about the movie JAWS and that famous line - "We have got to get a bigger boat".

Of course, the kids were jumping up and down in the boat and screaming with excitement. They loved it! - "Man did you see that!" - "It was a whale!" - "No you dummy it was a great white shark!" - "No, no, no, it was a seal and it had Uncle John's fish in its mouth" - WOW!!

As we headed back to shore, we all began to relax and laugh and tease each other as to who was most scared by what had just happened. I realized then that even though my kids had no fish to show for their efforts, they did have one heck of a fish story to tell all their friends when they got back home and they had their own Kodak Moment to remember for the rest of their lives.



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# \_\_\_\_\_ copy(s) of “The Coastal Town of Owls Head, Maine” at \$32.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
# \_\_\_\_\_ box(s) of six note cards with envelopes at \$10.00 per box = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check if items are to be delivered: \_\_\_\_\_ OR, if they are to be mailed \_\_\_\_\_ (add \$3) = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total the column and make your check payable to **Mussel Ridge Historical Society** \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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### WE’RE HAVING A GREAT SUMMER!

Mussel Ridge Historical Society has been sprucing up the Old Homestead on Ash Point Drive with a fresh coat of paint on our sign, thanks to Talyer Philbrook & Annah Danforth. Our farmhouse and barn have been electrified thanks to B.C. Electric, and the east side of our farm house has been re-sided with new cedar shingles, thanks to Murray Builder, Inc. Most importantly, we must extend our sincerest “Thanks” to all the folks who encouraged us in our plans and donated cash toward these projects.

We opened the Homestead for public visits two weeks earlier than in years past. Several of our hosts and hostesses have prepared talks and displays about their particular historical interests. Each week will be a different subject. Drop in to meet our members and peruse our display of Owl’s Head literature.

On Sunday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, we hosted our annual Community Picnic at the Old Homestead. A menu of grilled hot dogs, Maynard Stanley’s bean hole baked beans, hand cranked homemade ice cream, a wide variety of salads and more desserts than you can shake a stick at was available for all to partake of. Old friends gathered under the ancient Silver Maple tree to reminisce while the children had tire swings, a pie eating contest, and other games to entertain themselves. Owl’s Head Volunteer Fire Department rolled in with Engine 3 loaded with t-shirts for the kids. A crab picking demonstration was messy but fun while Dusty & Joanna’s band kept the music lively with new renditions of old songs and old renditions of songs forgotten.

Although no actual census was taken, we feel confident the attendance was the highest we’ve ever had at any previous picnic. Before it all broke up we managed to capture the nearly 100 attendees on film and we’ll have copies made for you to purchase. If you had the misfortune to miss it this year, mark your calendar for the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in July, 2018. Presently, we’re considering holding it on Saturday next year. Let us know what you think and feel free to offer suggestions for subsequent community picnics.



## A Find from the 1850's

I am 15 years old, and one of my hobbies is metal detecting. I have been detecting a property in the village on South Shore Drive in Owls Head with a home from 1946 for some time now, and about a year ago I made a very exciting find. Much of the yard appears to have been filled in with soil from somewhere else, but a few areas remain untouched. From the finds I have made I have reason to believe that the property has a history dating back to at least the mid-1800's, and that there possibly was another building on the property at some point.

When I first started searching on the property two years ago, I only made one notable find, a harmonica reed. This relic likely dates from the late 1800's to the early 1900's, predating the current house. Since I found nothing else to suggest that there was any activity on the property, I passed it off as a fluke find. I gave up on the property for some time, but in the summer of 2016 I decided to see if I could turn up different results by swinging the coil of my metal detector under bushes and other undergrowth around the edges of the property, so as to get to undisturbed soil. I found a broken piece of a suspender buckle using this method, another relic predating the house. I almost made it around the entire perimeter of the property without digging another non-ferrous signal, but on a small strip of property that I had never detected before I got a good signal. It ended up being a bottle cap, but what got me excited is that I could tell the soil in this strip of land had never been disturbed. After walking just five feet I got an amazing signal. In one whole I recovered eight "wheat" cents, a 1937 buffalo nickel, and a 1942 quarter from Canada. The newest coin was from 1951. This was a very exciting find, but nothing that predated the house. what I found next is the reason I am writing this.

I wanted to go over this undisturbed area very well, and dig even questionable signals that could be iron. The next signal I got was just two feet away, and it was bouncing between coin and iron on the meter. From six inches deep I popped up a tiny coin. I took one glance at it and knew exactly what it was. I had just found a three cent piece, more colloquially known as a trime. There are both silver and nickel varieties of this coin. I had found the silver variety, minted between 1851 and 1873 (the one I found is dated 1852). The coin had a small round hole in it, through which a chain or piece of string would be strung. It could have been part of a piece of more modern jewelry, but being as deep as it was that is unlikely. In the 1800's three cents were worth much more than they are today. Therefore, people would go to much greater lengths not to lose coinage. One method was to hole all of your change and put it on a loop of string. You would carry this string around, and untie the loop when you needed to make a transaction. This find really made it apparent that there was activity on this property long before 1946.

Subsequent searches have solidified that theory. I have found a very large amount of square-headed nails in the area that the three cent piece came from, and these were phased out in the 1880s. The house on the neighboring property appears to be rather old, so my current theory is that the property I searched was part of the adjacent property in the 1800's. The three cent piece and large concentration of square nails came just about ten feet from the property line dividing the two yards, so this upholds the theory. The large concentration of square nails may even be a sign that there was a small cabin or outbuilding on the property I was searching. The finds have not been plentiful from that property, but there has been enough evidence to safely say it has a much longer history than I ever imagined.

*By Yanni Raymond*

## Quite a Nice Find!

A couple years ago our Newsletter had an article on the Cawther Spring Co in Ingraham's Hill. Also known as the Hewitt Bottling Company. Thanks to Micah & Claire Philbrook for donating a bottle they found off Owls Head with Cawther Spring Co imprinted on it. We have it on display at the Old Homestead. If anyone knows anymore about this company please let us know.



## A SWEET HEIRLOOM

Of all the icons of Summer, salt water taffy quite possibly has the most colorful history. About 1880

taffy was introduced in the shops and stalls along Atlantic City's boardwalk as a "grab & go" quick snack. At that time it was a long, labor intensive process to make and package; each maker using his own special recipe that deviated only slightly from all the others.



In 1883 a severe storm flooded the Atlantic City shop of David Bradley, soaking every item in his inventory. During the cleaning up, a young girl approached and asked if he had any candy to sell. Hoping to add a bit of humor to a sad situation, Mr. Bradley replied, "I've got plenty of salt water taffy". The girl bought some shared her "salt water taffy" with friends and a craze was born.

Since then it has developed into a highly competitive, multi-million dollar business. In fact, the 1921 U.S. Supreme Court had to untangle a complicated infringement battle between the manufacturers of taffy pulling machines. It seems each one was buying up their competitor's newest innovations and working them into their own machines. The companies ended up suing each other for patent rights but weren't exactly sure which new innovation was their own.

Here in New England, we are most familiar with Haven's Salt Water Taffy. The story goes that when Herbert Haven married in 1915, his family, who were candy makers, gave the bride and groom the family recipe for salt water taffy as a wedding gift. Since then, Haven's has been experimenting with different flavors (using the heirloom recipe) and have thirty concoctions, many sugar free. Also, Haven's will attempt to make a special flavor for a customer. Some years ago, they were approached by a local lobster festival chairman asking them to make a lobster flavored salt water taffy. It got only as far as the taste test and was discontinued.

Today we can buy salt water taffy in every State of the Union, even those nowhere near the ocean. Though recipes may call for salt and water, there is no "salt water" actually in the candy



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## THE STUNTMAN

Most people today wouldn't recognize his picture nor would they know who Enos E. Canutt was. Born in Washington State in 1895, he was best known as a western movie stuntman who often doubled for Tom Mix, Douglas Fairbanks and John Wayne in their more difficult scenes. It all started for Enos when, at eleven years old, he broke a wild bronc on his family's ranch. By age sixteen he was a seasoned bronc rider and bulldogger in the local rodeos. In 1917 he won his first Olympic medal in between sessions as horse trainer for the French military. Somewhere in those early years he was tagged with the nickname "Yakima" (after a town near his home, though he never actually lived there) and it stuck like glue for the rest of his life



While working the pro-rodeo circuit he met and married Kitty Wells, a bronc riding champ in her own right. During a rodeo award ceremony in Los Angeles he was approached by a movie producer offering him bit parts in the western action movies of the period. So skilled at trick riding and dismounting a horse he quickly became a regular, eventually perfecting the art of leaping from a horse at full gallop onto a runaway stage coach. The stunt of falling off the front of the coach into the team's traces, then sliding out between the rear wheels was his signature trick. His wagon crashes and simultaneous team release are still used today.

In the 1940s and 50s many a young cowboy "wannabe" attempted some of his tricks on their trusty single speed Schwinn. Everything from rolling dismounts to transfers onto a Radio Flyer wagon were practiced. A nine year lad old in our neighborhood even tried a running leap over the porch railing into the saddle of his waiting bike. It

was neither graceful nor successful.

In spite of his rough and tumble career as a stuntman, rodeo performer and horse trainer with all of the associated injuries, "Yakima" died of natural causes in May 1986, just shy of his ninety-first birthday.

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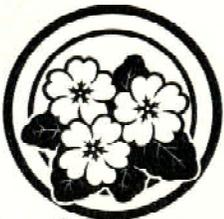
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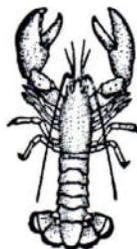
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