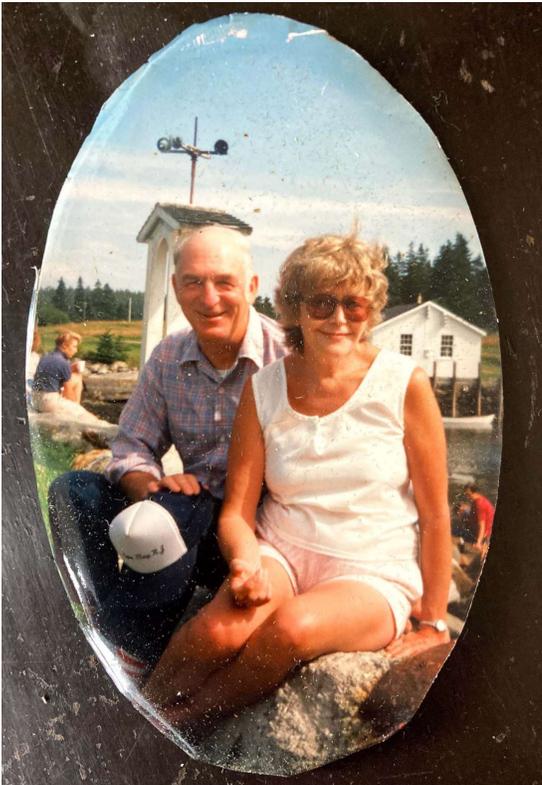


Mussel Ridge News

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

Fall 2022 ~ Issue 56 www.musselridge.org



Karl & Alice Hurd

What do the Owls Head Garden Club, members of the Hurd family, and patrons of the Election Day bake sale have in common? They are all valued and valuable benefactors of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society (MRHS). The Owls Head Garden Club recently fulfilled a very generous pledge to MRHS's capital campaign, which will finance a Learning Center to house the Society's collections and give researchers and visitors a place to investigate Owls Head history and culture. The Hurd clan offered to enhance MRHS's collection of historical artifacts by donating a giant cauldron; Carol, Diane, and Maureen, daughters of Karl and Alice Hurd, are making this gift, dedicated to the memory of their parents. And Owls Head's voters—well, they satisfied their craving for something sweet by purchasing baked goods donated to raise funds for their local historical society. We greatly appreciate each and every contribution, whatever its form, for we couldn't keep the history of our area alive without an entire community of supporters.

Having set a goal for the Learning Center falling in the range of \$150,000 to \$200,000, MRHS has been raising funds since 2019, despite the disruption of the COVID pandemic. We are also seeking contributions by appealing to foundations through targeted grant-writing. To date, our efforts have garnered over \$80,000 in donations and monies raised.

The story behind the cauldron being offered by the Hurd family is the stuff of potboilers, literally and figuratively. Horace Beals, at one time a partner in the unsuccessful Franklin Granite Company, accepted the 55-acre Dix Island and some smaller neighboring islands as payment for a debt owed to him. Beals was not a fan of the island—He is reputed to have said that it was the ideal location to commit suicide by jumping off one of its towering granite cliffs—but he made the most of its potential as a quarrying operation. Serving as the operations man, Beals collaborated with Courtland P. Dixon, a Southerner whose father was a Rhode Island senator, and whose brother was a New York congressman. Dixon parlayed his political connections into a lucrative contract for the Charleston, SC customs house; the contract specified that granite from Maine would face the edifice, the first in a long line of contracts with similar clauses requiring granite from Maine. Although business slowed during the Civil War, it resumed afterward, leading to the formation of a coalition called the Granite Ring.



Cauldron - about 3 ft in diameter

Originally comprised of General Davis Tilson's Hurricane Island Granite Company, Mark St. John's Clark Island Company, J.R. Bodwell's Bodwell Granite Company of Vinalhaven, and Dixon's Dix Island Granite Company, the Granite Ring enjoyed lucrative contracts for decades. The contracts further enriched their owners because they specified that the granite would be priced at actual extraction costs plus fifteen percent, a guaranteed profit that rivaled the best returns on Wall Street.

Demand for quarry laborers soared, and the companies advertised for stonecutters internationally, leading to an influx of workers from Scotland and Ireland. Many of those who quartered on Dix Island boarded at The Dix Island Hotel (250 rooms), The Aberdeen (200 rooms), and The Shamrock (350 rooms). Although none of these hotels have

Quarrying on nearby High Island



survived, the cauldron donated by three daughters of Karl and Alice Hurd was reputedly used in the kitchen of a rooming house called The Emerald. Such a plentiful workforce required large implements for food preparation, and this cauldron fit the bill.

Much later, Harland Hurd, grandfather to Carol, Diane, and Maureen, who are making the bequest in honor of their parents, used the cauldron to boil tar, with which he coated his fishing nets. Most of the nets formed an integral part of fishing weirs.

Karl Hurd, the women's father, explained that his father maintained fishing weirs at Crescent Beach and a few other places, sometimes closing off Rockport Harbor and Glen Cove at high tide and then scooping out the fish at low tide. In other words, the cauldron has been involved in feeding the masses for many years, first as a stewpot, subsequently as receptacle for tar, which coated nets to trap fish bound for market.

<https://maineencyclopedia.com/dix-island/>

<https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/maine-duchess-dix-island-rise-fall-great-granite-ring/>

Hurd family lore



Winter Hours : Sat: 10 - 5

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

To all of our loyal readers, advertisers and contributors;

For this last 2022 issue of the Mussel Ridge Historical Society's (MRHS) Newsletter, I thought it would be appropriate to deviate from our normal format and thank everyone who has contributed funds toward the building of our new Learning Center.

To be honest, we didn't think it would take this long to raise the Town's required minimum deposit amount of \$150,000, but the COVID 19 pandemic really hit us and every other nonprofit organization's fundraising efforts hard. People who would normally give money to us or the library or the conservation committee were instead diverting their donations to those charities concentrating on feeding people (like the AIO Food Pantry), relieving the sick, or providing aid to the unemployed.

However, with the advent of vaccines, we now appear to be slowly recovering from this long national nightmare. Raising large sums of money remains a challenge, though, and we are canvassing one dollar at a time. We have been very fortunate to host some large money-raising events, such as the Claire Coffey estate sale, but those opportunities happen infrequently.

We are also very vigilant when it comes to costs. We try to keep our expenses to an absolute minimum in an effort to devote every penny we can to the Learning Center Fund. All of our officers and directors work for free and always have. We have no parties or events paid for by the MRHS. When possible, we pay for nothing except insurance and rent.

We also feel very fortunate to have David Matthews of Owls Head as our Treasurer. A full-time accountant before his retirement, Dave is currently serving as the Treasurer for not only the MRHS, but is also the current Chair of the Finance Committee for the People's United Methodist Church of South Thomaston. Dave has previously served as a member of the Select Board for Owls Head and held positions on various local school boards and related committees.

The Board of Directors meets at 9:30 a.m. on the second Tuesday of each month (except for the month of December) at the Owls Head Community Building. Dave prepares the Treasurer's report, detailing all of the previous month's financial transactions, which, in turn, is reviewed, approved, and adopted by the Board.

I want to assure everyone who has or is thinking about contributing money toward the building of our new Learning Center that our books are open to those who wish to review them. Moreover, our Board meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

If anyone has any questions, please do not hesitate to email our Secretary, Rod Weeks, at ledgemere1@gmail.com. He will answer your inquiry as soon as he can.

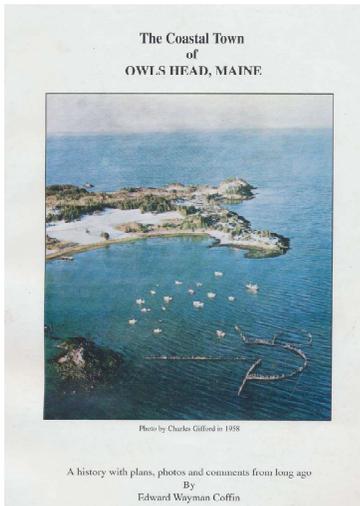


*Mussel Ridge Historical Society Committee and Board members
l to r: Ann Rafferty, Rod Weeks, Dave Matthews, Marty Shaw,
Susan Thomas, Michelle Miller, Carolyn Philbrook, Gail Ladd,
Kay Dodge*

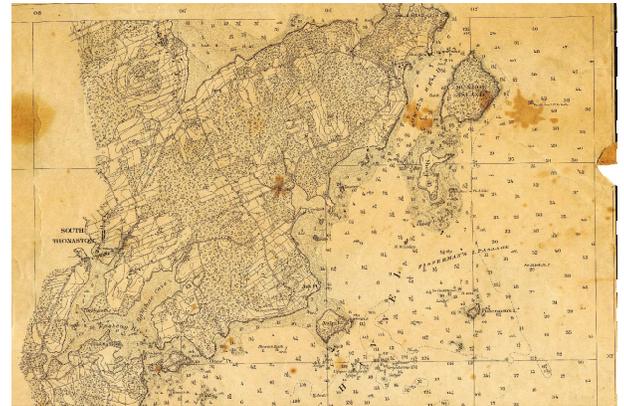
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

Marty Shaw, President
The Mussel Ridge Historical Society

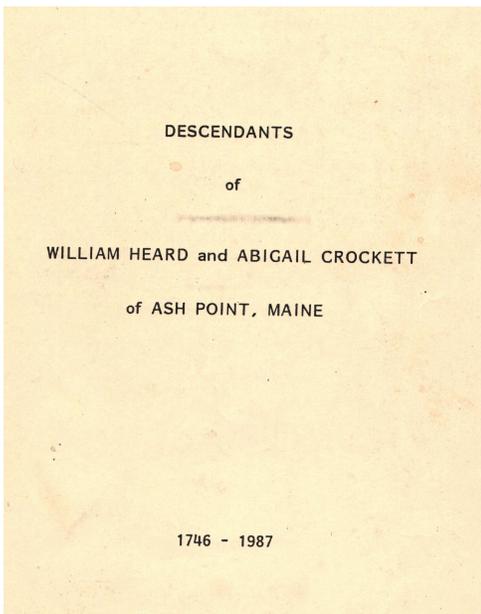
Products for sale



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



\$56- 1873 of Owls Head canvas chart 16" x 20"



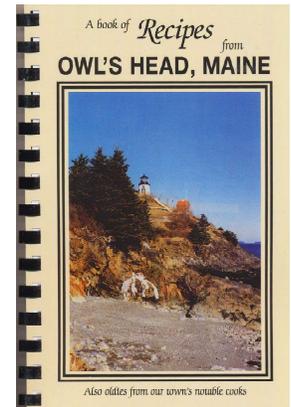
**NEW Item!!
Reprint with over 300 pages \$41**

**Descendants of
William Heard and Abigail Crockett
of Ash Point, Maine**

by Charles Candage



**NEW!!!
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

We deliver locally or ship

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

Owls Head Cemetery Committee News!

We are working on a spiral-bound booklet which will contain updated transcriptions (and some genealogical information) for all 15 cemeteries in town, including a list of all (known) veterans buried here. In addition there will be a corrected list of the Keepers of Owls Head Lighthouse, six of whom are buried in Owls Head.

The Cemetery Committee continues researching veterans buried in Owls Head. We have added medallions to all known veteran gravesites. In 2023 we will begin replacing the plastic ones with longer-lasting metal medallions, first for the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Veterans. The Cemetery Committee would be interested in information about unrecognized veterans as well as any burials without headstones or markers.

The OHCC has a brand NEW Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OHCC>, on Facebook and a NEW webpage on the Town of Owls Head website which contains the updated transcriptions for ALL 15 cemeteries in town! Please follow us on Facebook!

Christmas Cooking or Anytime!

Mildred Wiley's Peanut Butter Fudge

2 cups white sugar
2/3 cup milk (not evaporated)
Boil milk and sugar to soft ball stage. Remove from stove then add:
1 cup peanut butter 1 cup marshmallow fluff
1 t. vanilla.
Beat til it starts to thicken with a spoon, but not too long. Pour into greased 8 or 9" pan.



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Christmas Memories - Growing up in Ash Point in the 1930s

By Eleanor Curtis Nash



Eleanor Curtis Nash (1928 – 2019) grew up in Ash Point on the corner of Crockett’s Beach Rd and Ash Point Drive and my Mom (Norma Curtis Meserve - 1927- 2007) grew up across from the Ash Point one room school a couple houses up the hill. Eleanor and her husband Robert Nash lived in the Keag village. She gifted my Mom (her cousin), a book of Christmas childhood memories in 1998. Her daughters, Mary Kate Grierson and Kelly Taylor have given me permission to share some snippets with you.

“School Vacation

Sometimes we had over two weeks off. The pond at Coffeys’ was always cleared. Mr. Coffey dammed it every winter. The pond seemed so large and beautiful. On Saturday, the pond was filled with many kids. The tires were burned each night. The outside light came on; the signal to go home.”

Norma’s Home

Aunt Myrtle had a comfortable kitchen. She always had something baked. Her date bars were so delicious. Dishes always done and put away. Table always with an oilcloth tablecloth. I can remember how oilcloth smelled. What a treat to have a new one with pretty flowers on it.

Lottie’s Store

Lottie never had any Christmas decorations in her store. I wonder why? She had the Post Office, candy counter that I thought was 20 ft long in my young eyes. And she had a backroom. Pennies had dropped through the cracks in the front landing. We could see them. They looked as though they would count up to hundreds of dollars.

The Tree at School

Where did we get the tree for the school? Was it in Ballyhac?

Did someone bring it? I could never remember the decorations. I know we did not make them in school. I just remember how beautiful it was and how cozy it made the room feel.

Buttons

“Button, button, who has the button”? Those games were played in the homes, along with dominos, Chinese checkers, Old Maids, and others. Would that have been played if there was television in those days. I am pleased that there wasn’t. What great fun we had.

Christmas Menu

For dinner: Roasted turkey and or roasted pork from the family grown hog.

For Breakfast: Home cured bacon, eggs from the hens that were raised, homemade breads for toasting, homemade jellies and jams. What a fun and delicious breakfast!

Lottie Robbins

The mail came to Lottie’s store and post office. Even though the mail was carefully placed in each designated box, Lottie would look at each one and say “They are all yours!” And it was so much fun to go home and look for just one card addressed to me! The train came into Rockland with mail.



Norma (l) and Eleanor (r) in front of the Ash Point School

continued page on 8

F.L.S. Morse

Mr. Morse thought he was Santa, but he never left any presents at school, he just told stories with his arms behind his back. He probably felt like Santa. That was ok. He was old.

Daddy

Your father, Maynard W. Curtis, Daddy to you. He loved his family and ruled with a loving quiet hand. He closed the curtains when counting money. Much to Aunt Myrtle's not understanding. He would put some hot tea in the saucer and drink from it. And the delicious desserts were served (to him) after his dinner plate was turned over. Maybe something was always said, but I think that the server would not have it any other way!

Mothers

It was from you I first learned to think, to feel, to imagine, to believe. There are many kinds of mothers; gentle, brainy, smiling, grim, ambitious, happy, busy. They all in one way or another raise their children and send them on their way with the best gift anyone can give, the certainty of love. Housework, sewing, cooking, praying. Even with all these, she keeps her children from straying. She kept us on the long leash of our endless rope of language; looping and knotting us as firmly to her as ever."

Carolyn Meserve Philbrook



Cousins and best friends: Eleanor Curtis Nash on left and sitting is Norma Curtis Meserve @2007 on Normas's 80th birthday.

We would love to hear from you on your childhood memories. history@musselridge.org



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Thank You Folks for all you do!!

A special thanks to our Fall Speaker, Jayne Gordon. It was a great turnout to hear about the history of tourism and vacationing in Maine. Information on what drove folks to Maine throughout the years, Owls Head being one of the many fine destinations, and where they stayed was very interesting!

A special thanks to all the great cooks in town who made our voting day bake sale a success. Between food, donations, and merchandise purchases, we earned a whopping \$863!! I think a record! We appreciate all the volunteers who cooked to make this happen.